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The flower of France

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THE FLOWER OF FRANCE



BY
JUSTIN HUNTLY MCCARTHY

AUTHOR OF
"THE DRYAD" "THE LADY OF LOYALTY HOUSE"
"THE PROUD PRINCE" ETC.



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**TO
MY SISTER
I DEDICATE THIS STORY**

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**THE
FLOWER OF FRANCE**

THE FLOWER OF FRANCE

I

HOW TWO MEN CAME TO DOMREMY

WHEN a space between green hills has gained for itself the name of the Valley of Colors, those that hear the delectable epithet picture to themselves a vale painted by nature with the hues of innumerable flowers. Names of earth-places are sometimes misleading, even to contradiction, but this name was a pattern of truth-telling. Vaucouleurs — Vallis colorum was the way the Romans phrased it—designated a valley as radiant and fragrant and flowery as heart could wish. To speak by the card, the name of Vaucouleurs had shifted, since the Roman days, from the enamelled valley to the stalwart and warlike town, outpost of the ancient France, where in the year 1429 Robert, Lord of Baudricourt, held for King Charles of France against his English enemies and their Burgundian allies.

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But all that lovely prairie, nourished by the green waters of the Meuse, deserved in its floral pomp the title which time in its irony had transferred to the gray walls of the grim little fighting town.

All along the Valley of Colors the banks of the Meuse were dotted with hamlets, villages, and towns—Frebecourt, Coussey, Domremy, Greux, Maxey, Burey-la-côte, Burey-en-Vaux, Chalaines, and Vaucouleurs itself. To Robert, Lord of Baudricourt, ruffian, savage, and magnificent fighting-man, only one of these names had any importance, the name of Vaucouleurs, where he reigned the truculent loyal deputy of his wretched king. Had the question been presented to him which of all the villages, children of the Meuse, was the most insignificant, he might, if his lumbering mind had realized a scale of such trivialities, have decided that Domremy was the least important—Domremy that after all had scarcely an independent existence, but was no more than an offshoot from Greux, the parent hamlet. As a matter of fact, Robert of Baudricourt cared little for Domremy, and thought less about it. If anybody had suggested to him that a condition of things might arise which would make Domremy more important in the eyes of the world than Vaucouleurs, he would have shown his wolf's teeth in a grin, and probably struck his interlocutor a lusty blow, for the lord of Vaucouleurs was hot-tempered and hard-fisted. Which will serve, as you shall learn, to show that even a valiant man-at-arms may be wanting in

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the prophetic sense or even in the sense of the eternal possibilities.

The village of Domremy was quite content with its own insignificance, and would not have dreamed of contesting any contempt which the Lord of Baudricourt might have harbored of its modest lot on a perturbed planet. It nestled coyly in its nook on the movement of the Meuse, and would willingly have let the world go by while it ploughed its fields, tended its beeves, herded its sheep, hived its bees, sowed, reaped, fed, slept, fasted, prayed—did, in a word, all that became a self-respecting community of simple-minded men and women of the pastoral order to do. But the world was not as indifferent to Domremy as Domremy was to the world. Great princes loved and hated, quarrelled and fought, somewhere in the vast spaces beyond the mountains, and the consequences of those loves and hates, quarrels and contests, were felt—broken waves but not spent—in the little hamlet on the threshold of Lorraine. It is a far cry from Paris to Domremy, yet when one fine day the heralds in the capital of France announced in successive breaths that King Charles the Sixth of France was dead, and that King Henry the Sixth of England reigned in his stead, the echo of that cry rang along the eaves of Domremy and startled honest hearts. For the people of Domremy—with one exception to be known hereafter—stood loyally for the little gentleman who danced and sang at Chinon, and whom they thought of and prayed for, very fer-

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vently, as his Sacred Majesty King Charles the Seventh.

You must take it for granted that Henry the Fifth of England, thrasonical, bombastic, astonishingly valiant, believed, or chose to believe, that he had a claim to the throne of France; that in pursuit of that claim he made war upon France, as his no less valiant predecessors had made war upon France; and that following the example of his predecessors he had so gallantly banged, thwacked, raddled, and harried the French in a famous battle as to make him King of France in fact if not in law. The fame of Agincourt eclipsed Poitiers, eclipsed Crecy; the valor of the Black Prince paled before the heroic achievements of Hal of Eastcheap, the companion of Falstaff. Henry the Fifth having won the day married a daughter of the mad King of France, Charles the Sixth, and had a child by her that was Harry the Sixth of England before he was nine moons old—conquering Harry Fifth falling suddenly before the All-conqueror—and Henry the Second of France in the eyes of all Englishmen and of such degenerate Frenchmen as were willing to bear their smarts and kiss the English whip.

Domremy knew all this—knew also, to its cost, that the matter was not merely a quarrel, however big and serious, between Englishmen on the one side and Frenchmen on the other. There were Frenchmen, great Frenchmen, who fought as valiantly for the English leopards and were as voluble of loyalty to the

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English King as any burgher of Westminster or yeoman of Kent. There would have been more chance for the young man who called himself, and who was called by his daily dwindling adherents, Charles the Seventh, if the illustrious Duke of Burgundy had not chosen to throw in his lot with the English aggressors. The Duke of Burgundy had his reasons, based on a sequence of assassinations. His father had assassinated a duke of Orleans who was said to be the lover of Queen Isabella, wife of mad King Charles the Sixth and mother of sad King Charles the Seventh—it was all very complicated—and the assassinating Duke of Burgundy had, in his turn, been assassinated, under the very eyes of the young Charles the Seventh, at an interview arranged in order to make peace between Burgundy's duke and the heir to the throne. So the sun of the murdered duke ranged with the enemies of the heir to the throne, and the English, helped by the tremendous Burgundians, were steadily moving from conquest to conquest and steadily diminishing the territory that still called itself France for a French king. One great city still held out valiantly for Charles of France; one great city still stemmed the tide of the armies of Henry of England. Beautiful Orleans, whose musical duke had lain captive in England since the battle of Agincourt, was closely beleaguered by the English, but so long as it held out, so long might Charles be said, in a sense, to have a kingdom and, in a sense, to reign. But if Orleans were once taken, nothing could stay the rush of the

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English advance that would sweep King Charles out of his kingship and perhaps out of existence.

All this was familiar knowledge by every hearth in every hamlet in the Valley of Colors. Up in Vaucouleurs itself, Robert of Baudricourt waited grimly for the day when a dusty courier should spur to the town with the news that Orleans had fallen to the English, and that King Charles was prisoner or fugitive. In little Domremy honest hearts ached for the fate of the fair city, and the prayers of peasants petitioned Heaven for the succor of Orleans and the safety of the King. But no soul in Orleans dreamed what one soul in Domremy knew, that the little hamlet was fated to save the fair city and to make a great king.

On a brisk day of early spring, in the year 1429, two men of very differing minds and bodies were both, for very different reasons, making for the little village of Domremy from different points of the compass. Each of the men had an armed following, each of them was warlike, each of them served, or professed to serve, the lilies of France. Neither of the men dreamed that a day of infinite importance to his own life, to the lives of many thousands of men, and to the life of one girl-child had dawned with the morning's sunrise. One of these two men rode to Domremy of set purpose to please a woman's will; the other rode to Domremy because it happened to lie on the way to Vaucouleurs, whither he was bound. The man who made for Domremy from the north, for a woman's

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pleasure, was the Lord Gilles de Laval, baron of this place, count of that place, marshal of France, close friend and favored counsellor of King Charles. The man who made for Domremy from the south was a Gascon soldier of fortune, marauder, freebooter, and faithful servant of the King, whose name was Etienne de Vignolles, and who was always called Lahire.

The Lord Gilles de Laval and the Gascon adventurer Lahire had this much in common that each of them kept a queer secret quiet in his heart. The secret of the Lord Gilles de Laval was no other than this, that while he believed in witchcraft, as most people did in his day, he went further, as many did in his day, and studied and sought to practise magic; and then went further still and did what not a few did in his day, became a worshipper of Satan, a votary of the Black Mass, who sought to propitiate the Prince of the Power of the Air by the offer of human sacrifice. The man was a fine scholar, a brave soldier, a politic statesman, a lover of beauty in all its manifestations, but the blood-lust burned in his heart and devil-worship brooded in his brain and spoiled him.

What the secret of Lahire was you shall learn in due time. Enough for the present to suggest that for the scars he carried on face and body—and they were many—he had been ready to weep more water of tears than ever the wounds had been to yield red blood. Now Lahire rode towards Domremy with only his ragged rascals at his heels, Gascon gentles for the

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most part, proud, poor ruffians with no other purpose in life than to fight for Lahire and to fill their pockets. But Gilles de Laval rode with a woman in his company. The woman was five-and-twenty, darkly beautiful, looked like a queen and was a peasant. Gilles de Laval spoke of her and to her as his sister, but she had been his leman for some seven years. He had seen her in service at Vaucouleurs, had been fired by her fresh loveliness, and succeeded in spiriting her away to his grim castle in Brittany. Many women had been so spirited away before, but Gilles had not long loved them, and their lives had not outlived his love. There was a hall in that castle which was the graveyard of much that was fair and frail. But the servant girl from Vaucouleurs was not to be so sepultured. She charmed Gilles out of all desire to kill her, and if she shared in his strange faith and shameful incantations she saved her life, and her beauty thrived under Gilles's care, for he was a notable leech and skilled in healthful simples. Her mind grew with her beauty, for it pleased Gilles to teach her many arts, and after a while he labored at the perfection of her physical and mental gifts for a new reason. What that reason was the woman knew quite well and acquiesced in cheerfully, for the love and the cunning of Gilles had stifled her soul. So Gilles's beautiful mistress disappeared from the grim castle with the hall of horror, and presently Gilles's beautiful sister made her appearance at another castle as coming from sojourn in a distant convent. Now the brother and sister were

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travelling together towards Chinon for the furtherance of their scheme.

Gilles de Laval had engineered his little deception dexterously and well. It was not difficult to carry through in those days. The story he told was plausible, easily supported if called in question, which was unlikely. As a matter of fact, it never was called in question, and in all the strange happenings which it is our duty to relate, no doubt was ever raised as to the alleged relationship between the great lord who was a favorite of the King, and the beautiful woman who was also foregraced or foredoomed to gain the King's favor.

II

HOW FOLK SERVED THE FAIRIES' TREE

SOME little way from the village of Domremy there was a fairly level clearing in an oak wood that covered the slope of the gentle hill on whose summit stood the chapel of Our Lady of Domremy. In the centre of this clearing stood a huge and ancient beech-tree. The venerable tree had a great hollow in its trunk, for the fingers of Time had plucked it apart as if to tear its heart out. But the wound was not mortal; the tree still lived and bore, and now in the early spring its spreading boughs burgeoned with green buds and little leaves. There was something very royal in the seeming of this antique tree, as it stood in its stately isolation like some queen to whom the courtier oak-trees all around did homage. "Fair as a lily," the people of Domremy called their cherished tree, when in the pride of summer its leafy branches swept the ground and the neighboring streamlet rippled in the shadow of currant-bushes and gooseberry-bushes.

Long ago when the castle of Domremy was still a stately habitation the lords and ladies made it a

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pleasant practice, with each renewal of the spring, to quit their dwelling and feast merrily and healthily in the open air, stretched at their ease on the sward at the foot of the noble beech. And when the meat was done and the wine drunk, after the passing of jests and the singing of many songs, gay and plaintive, the lords and ladies would rise to their feet and dance their grave, majestic dances to the lisp and tinkle of quaint musical instruments. Then the tree was called the Ladies' Tree, in honor of the high-born, the beautiful, whose bright eyes and fine color stirred the hearts of their cavaliers, as hand clasped hand in the melodious passage of the measure in the shade of the benignant beech.

But Time, that had ripped the noble tree asunder, had blown so coldly upon the noble lords and ladies as to puff them altogether away, and the green clearing and dimpling fountain knew them no more, and Domremy castle became, as it were, a habitation for dragons, and the Ladies' Tree was forlorn of its votaries. But the memory of the dances persisted, suffering a rustic change, and by-and-by it was whispered by peasant lips into peasant ears that they were fairies who had used to dance beneath the tree, nay more that the fairies danced there still of spring mornings and summer eves and autumn nights, when all the wood was quiet. Thus the Ladies' Tree became in the fulness of days the Fairies' Tree, and the folk of the village loved in their turn to do what the departed lords and ladies had done, to gather to-

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gether and be glad in its shadow, eating little cakes and drinking from the stream, singing and dancing and weaving garlands of flowers. There were certain days when these pretty rites were especially performed, but at all times and seasons it was customary for the boys and girls, the lads and lasses of the village, when they could steal a breathing while from their work, to repair to the Fairies' Tree and take their ease at its feet.

On the very spring morning which saw the approach, already heralded, of two strangers to Domremy, a little group of folk from the village had forgathered in the clearing on the hill, a group of three maidens and a youth. The three maidens held hands and danced in a ring in front of the tree, while the youth lay stretched on the grass in a somewhat languid and dejected attitude, and fingered listlessly at a viol. The three girls were all country girls, of humble country birth, but they were all comely, with more than the comeliness of health—indeed, if they had not been comely the young gentleman on the grass would not have been of their company—and all comely in different kinds of comeliness. The girl in the kirtle of straw-yellow was Hauviette, brown-eyed, brown-locked, robust, and mirthful. She that was clad in garments of slate-gray was Mengette, whose hair was of a russet, favor. The third, that was Isabellette, wore gown and bodice of stone-blue stuff that suited well with her slender, delicate figure, her hair of palest gold, and her eyes

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of wachet blue. As they skipped and jigged and twisted they might have seemed to the youth on the ground so many sweet nymphs emblematic of the clarity of spring. But Gérardin d'Épinal, stretched his length on the ground, did not eye the damsels with any very enthusiastic appreciation. He had been in love with each of them in turn, but that was long ago, before he had decided that there was only one woman in the world for him, and had got his knuckles soundly rapped for his presumption. Hauviette and Mengette had not heeded his faithlessness; their hearts were of solid stuff not easily won or troubled. But pale, delicate Isabellette had lost her heart to the young Burgundian gentleman, and was hurt at his treason, although she could not wonder at it. For all were agreed in Domremy that the girl Gérardin d'Épinal had been impertinent enough to woo was the most wonderful girl in all the world, or in all the Valley of Colors, which was, in truth, the limit of their knowledge of the world.

Gérardin d'Épinal did not consider his wooing impertinent, and was much affronted at his rebuff. To begin with, Gérardin was not a peasant. He was one of several sons of a squire of Burgundy, who, for all his gentility, was as poor as many a peasant, and was therefore vastly delighted when his kinswoman of Bourlemont offered to adopt one of his boys and educate him and start him in the world for old days' and old acquaintance' sake. But if Gérardin was proud of his birth, and conscious that

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he wore finer clothes than the villagers, and could read and write, he also found that it brightened his leisure, of which he had much, to pass his time with the pretty girls of Domremy, and tell them tales of chivalry, and fancy that he was very passionately in love with them. He was not now in love with any of the three who were dancing, so he eyed them coldly and listened coldly to their song.

Now this was the song that the girls sang in chorus as they danced:

"Airy fairy of the tree,
Made of dust and dew and fire,
Now no bigger than the bee,
Taller now than tallest spire,
Grant my heart's desire to me,
Grant to me my heart's desire.

"Tricksy pixie of the tree,
We your servants, dame and sire,
Meekly beg a boon of thee,
Please our hopes and pay our hire;
Grant my heart's desire to me,
Grant to me my heart's desire."

After the song came the incantation, when each girl chanted some little wish in a plaintive appeal to the fay. Hauviette sang:

"I want a new mantle, fairy, fairy."

Mengette sang:

"I want a new jacket, fairy, fairy."

Isabellette sang:

"I want a new kirtle, fairy, fairy."

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Gérardin turned on his elbow and parodied them spitefully.

"I want my old sweetheart, fairy, fairy," he cried, imitating their white magic.

Fair-haired Isabellette gave a little cry, and broke away from the ring to approach Gérardin and frown upon him pathetically.

"You spoil the spell," she said, sadly, for she was really in love with the young Burgundian, and she knew what name was cradled in his thoughts. "You must not talk of love to fairies."

Brown-haired Hauviette contradicted her promptly, as is the way with playmates.

"Why not? Joan says love is the true law for all, mortals or fairies."

This was the first time any of the four had spoken the name that they were all thinking of.

The name was written on Gérardin's heart, and he answered Hauviette very gloomily.

"Joan does not mean what I mean by love."

Isabellette approached him.

"You sigh for a star," she whispered, and her pallid grace was full of suggestion that towards her lay the way of wisdom. But Gérardin turned from her, sulky.

"Let me be," he grunted, and Isabellette shrunk back with tears in her blue eyes.

Red-headed Mengette shook her mane and spoke decisively.

"What Joan says must be right."

The note of quarrel in her voice struck Gérardin

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as quarrel strikes target, and he answered her with a sneer.

"Even when he says she hears voices and sees visions?"

Hauviette pounced upon him like a hungry dog on a bone.

"Joan never says so. Gossip says so, since she told the Lord Baudricourt at Vaucouleurs to send her to the Dauphin, saying that Heaven wished her to help him to raise the siege of Orleans."

Gérardin was cross, sourly impenitent, and meanly minded to decry his idol.

"Finely Baudricourt snubbed her," he snorted; "told her uncle to drub her soundly and take her home."

Hauviette answered him with a derisive laugh.

"You talk of snubbing, you who swore before justice at Toul that Joan had promised to marry you."

Mengette cut in with her word while Hauviette's indignation paused to take breath.

"But Joan denied your charge, a thing you thought she never would have the courage to do with her parents on your side, and the judges believed her."

Gérardin hung his head and his lips quivered with real grief, but he tried to assert his pride.

"She might have done worse. I am well born. I am well found for these parts."

Hauviette made him a mocking reverence, and her brown eyes danced as she remembered how Gérardin had played the gallant to her but two summers ago.

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"It is good of your bloodship," she simpered, mincingly, "to run after our humble petticoats," and as she spoke she gave a swing to those garments that showed a pretty piece of bare leg to the young man's gaze. Gérardin remembered how much he had been taken by Hauviette in the days before he had experienced wisdom, and he resented the recollection. He tried to think of something stinging to say, but could think of nothing, and was not too sorry for his failure, for Hauviette had a biting tongue and liked to use it, though she bore him no ill-will for the old philandering.

Ruddy Mengette, hot-tempered herself, was always willing to play peace-maker to others.

"Come, no grumbling," she protested. "Let us pick up our ring again and win the fairy's blessing."

While Gérardin rolled sulkily on his side, the girls were for joining hands again, but it was fated that the dance once interrupted was not to be renewed. For at that moment came a well-favored lad, strongly made, who, though dressed like the peasant that he was, had some indications in his attire of a consciousness that he was the son of one of the most well-to-do and notable inhabitants of Domremy. When he saw what the girls were at he frowned upon them and lifted up his hands in strenuous reproof.

"How can you caper so with France in agony?" he asked, sternly.

The dancers stopped and came from the tree to

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greet the new-comer. Gérardin lifted himself to a sitting posture and said, mockingly:

"Oh, wise Pierre d'Arc, how would it serve France if they didn't caper?"

Pierre turned upon Gérardin with a snarl,

"Yah! Burgundian! The only one in Domremy, thank God."

Now this was quite true, for though the people of Maxey village over yonder were Burgundians, and the lads of Maxey fought with the lads of Domremy, the only Burgundian in Domremy was the stranger Gérardin. Thus assailed, he defended himself.

"My sire is a squire of Burgundy."

"Burgundy's duke is enemy to France's king," Pierre d'Arc said, and looked as if that settled the matter. But it did not, because Gérardin was inclined to be argumentative, and retorted:

"Because France's king killed my duke's father."

Pierre snapped like an angry dog.

"Devil take your false duke. He should not side with the English."

Gérardin scrambled to his feet and confronted him.

"Why not? The English rule most of France, and will rule all when they take Orleans. And England's baby King comes of French blood royal."

The girls listened, breathless, hoping that Pierre had a reply. Pierre had.

"The Salic law bars him. We want France for a French king."

Gérardin grimaced like an ape.

HOW FOLK SERVED THE FAIRIES' TREE

"You say just what Joan says; like a silly starling."

Pierre kept quite silent for a moment, puffing his cheeks and staring hard at his antagonist. Then he suddenly spluttered into speech, and that speech was yellowed with acrimony. For Pierre resented Gérardin's gentility. Gérardin had good blood, true! But Gérardin was a penniless dependent upon the bounty of the Lady of Bourlemont, while he, Pierre d'Arc, was son of the elder of the village, son of the man who, with the most opulent of his neighbors, was able to lease and keep the ancient stronghold on the island in the river, to use as a refuge against marauders. What worth blood—and Burgundian blood at that—against such solid qualities of comfort. So he said, with a derisive drawl:

"I will tell you a thing Joan says of you. She says that as you are a Burgundian, she would like to cut off your head—always if it pleased God."

All the girls, save only Isabellette, laughed loudly at Gérardin's patent discomfiture. Poor Gérardin hung his head in an abasement of despair.

"Who scorns my heart may scorn my head," he gasped. Then, with a sudden spirit of self-confidence, he added, "I've a mind to go soldiering."

At this two of the girls tittered and one of the girls whimpered, and Pierre shouted, rudely:

"You'd make a pretty soldier, always running after the girls."

Gérardin nodded his head with an air of self-satisfaction.

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"Everything has a beginning. Lahire was a lad once and ran after lasses."

All the peasant in Pierre broke into a brutal guffaw of contempt for the less muscular youngster.

"Lahire! Lahire! Babble about great Lahire! Bravest of brave, wickedest of wicked, sad France's mad cavalier. You are very like Lahire, moon-calf!"

By this time poor Isabellette, her eyelids very red and her blue eyes bathed in salt water, had crept near to Gérardin, and now she whispered, tenderly:

"You'd be much nicer than Lahire."

The effect of her tenderness was instant upon Gérardin. He edged away.

"Let me be," he grumbled, beneath his breath. Then he murmured, thoughtfully, "I should like to see Lahire."

Hauviette opened her brown eyes wide as she conjured up memories of what she had heard about the famous reäver.

"They say he breathes fire like a dragon."

Mengette bettered her friend's effort at description of a soldier of fortune.

"And drinks blood like an ogre."

Isabellette gave a little shiver. She did not even like to think of Gérardin accomplishing either of these feats.

"Don't talk horrors. Let us to our dance again."

Gérardin instantly crossed her for the sake of asserting his sympathy for Joan.

HOW FOLK SERVED THE FAIRIES' TREE

"Nay, not if Joan dislike it," he urged, with a tenderness that was very nettles to Isabellette.

Hauviette snapped him up.

"I don't believe Joan does dislike it," she said, stoutly, and on this point they were beginning what promised to be a lengthy wrangle, when Pierre put a stop to the squabble.

"Here comes Joan to answer for herself," he said, and pointed to where, through the trees, a girl was making her way to them. Instantly all turned their gaze in that direction, and the three girls shouted gleefully. Gérardin hung his head a little and shuffled uneasily aside.

III

HOW JOAN SETTLED A SQUABBLE

NEARLY five hundred years have passed since the girl Joan dwelt in Domremy, and in all that time men and women have tried a thousand times to paint her picture, to snatch from meagre fact and liberal fancy some image of her likeness as she lived. An unknown hand hewed from stone a brave, staring face under a soldier's helmet, full-cheeked and round-eyed, which many take for the form and pressure of the Maid, and which at least was fashioned in the time of her triumph. Fantastic draughtsmen illustrated chronicles with grotesque effigies, which perhaps conveyed to them some fleeting impression of youth and beauty and divine courage and divine inspiration, but which convey to us nothing or less than nothing. Whimsical individuals of sixteenth century, of seventeenth century days delineated an amazon in Greek or Roman trappings of war, a Pentesilea or Camilla in cuirass and greaves and Athena helmet, and believed that they had done well enough. The eighteenth century minimized her personality with meticulous ingenuity; the nineteenth

HOW JOAN SETTLED A SQUABBLE

century, for the most and worst part, created a commonplace, patently romantic personage, ostentatiously sibylline, and accompanied, whenever possible, by sheep. There are exceptions, fair and brave and human. The total result of all the enthusiasms, well-spent or ill-spent, is ignorance. From the chronicler on whose authority this latter-day narrative is based this portrait is presented.

Joan was young in years and looked younger than her years, for though she was seventeen the seal of womanhood was not set upon her, and she seemed then and thereafter, in spite of her physical ripeness, to be ever the wonderful child. She was middling tall, of a sturdy carriage; slim of limbs, she was stoutly built, and for strength and endurance she was the equal of any lad of her standing in the Valley of Flowers. Her hair was very dark and thick and long; her eyes, dark blue, looked very steadily and steadfastly at everything she found worthy of her gaze. As for her face, some would not call it beautiful, maintaining it too sexless, or at the least too boyish for that mighty praise. Yet it was so fair and candid and kind and brave, and so governed by a strange harmony of strength and softness, that if it had been in very truth the countenance of a stripling boy, the spectator would have been ready to aver that it should have been the face of a fair girl. In absolute repose it showed almost stolid with the transmitted calm of the peasant line, but when it took fire from high emotion of love or anger it quickened into such

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nobility of passion, pity, or rage that a beholder might well cry aloud, in all sincerity, "Behold the face of an angel!"

The girl was clad in some coarse stuff that was dyed a vivid red, for, like all creatures of honorable heart and high purpose, Joan loved bright colors as she loved and because she loved the sunlight and the flowers and the pageant of the sunset and the dawn. Her legs were bare; her arms were bare from the elbows. She carried in her hands a garland of wild flowers, to which, as she came, she was still weaving some blossoms. She paused for a moment in a space between two trees, and smiled brightly upon her play-fellows as she slung her garland on the crook of her arm.

"Who cries for Joan in the copse?" she asked, and her voice was sweet and full, low and clear, a voice that seemed to appeal to the better senses of the hearer, even as the west wind does, and kindle a generous melancholy and fan it to a more generous hope. "What can I do for you, comrades?"

She came down among them as she spoke, and the girls gathered eagerly about her—arm round waist, arm round neck, arm hooked in elbow, they clung to her in a little bunch of eager, devoted girlhood. Hauviette, Mengette, and Isabellette all began talking at once, and the air rang with fragments of questions, shrilly. "Do you dislike—?" began one, and "May we or may we not—?" cried another, and "Of course if you do not wish—" asserted a third, and through

HOW JOAN SETTLED A SQUABBLE

all the feminine clamor boomed the deep voice of Pierre, thundering, "Back me, Joan."

Joan dexterously and gently disentangled herself from the human cluster that hung upon her, and her quiet eyes travelled thoughtfully over the flushed, excited faces.

"Gently, softly," she pleaded, yet her pleading had the ring of command in it, too. "What is your quarrel?"

Hauviette chirped, briskly:

"Pierre says we may not sing nor skip because France is sick."

This pert way of putting it irritated Pierre, and he came and faced his sister.

"Do folk dance by death-beds?" he questioned. "Am I not in the right, Joan?"

Joan looked at her brother with wide, unfathomable eyes and put her brown, strong hand to her chin as she answered, musingly: "Folk do not dance at death-beds. You are right there, Pierre, very right."

Pierre turned to the others, who looked properly abashed, with a great air of triumph.

"I said so," he trumpeted, and blew out his cheeks and looked tnutterably proud and insufferable. But Hauviette saw a smile at the corner of Joan's firm mouth, and felt certain that some way or other Pierre was making too much of his victory. Then Joan spoke very quietly.

"But folk may dance briskly if the House of Death becomes the House of Life. France was sick, but

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France quickens, so dance your liveliest, sing your sprightliest, boys and girls. There is a merry time coming."

Pierre flashed speech upon her, half angry at being trapped, half glad at words he did not understand.

"What merry time, while England and Burgundy murder France?"

There was no mirth on Joan's face now, only a grave ecstasy of exultation that made the quiet peasant face radiant.

"The time when Orleans shall be free of its leaguer, a time when our Dauphin shall be crowned at Rheims as a king should be, a time when there shall be no English in France."

Pierre gasped as he listened.

"When will this happen?" he asked. He knew dimly something of Joan's strangeness, but this was passing strange. Gérardin, for the first time since the coming of Joan, took a part in the conversation.

"When pigs fly and the sky rains roast larks," he suggested, sourly. Joan took no notice of his impertinence, but she answered Pierre as she might have answered him if he had asked her a question about the weather.

"This will happen very soon."

She moved a little way across the clearing, and once again Hauviette and Mengette were clinging to her lovingly and whispering at her ears.

"Have you heard sweet voices?" asked Hauviette.

"Have you seen sweet saints?" asked Mengette.

HOW JOAN SETTLED A SQUABBLE

Joan paused and laid her strong hands on their lips. "We must not speak of such things," she said, firmly, and then as if in pity for the disappointment on her playmates' faces, she added, softly: "But I think this will be a great day for France."

Pierre, his ear tuned to her tongue, caught the soft spoken words, and commented:

"Pray Heaven it be!"

There was a little pause, as if the talk had grown strange, and the talkers afraid of it. Isabellette now broke the silence by touching the garland that Joan carried on her arm.

"Is this for the Fairies' Tree?" she asked.

Joan shook her head. "No, for Our Lady of Domremy." Again she made to leave, but suddenly paused. "Listen! Some one is coming."

Hauviette looked about her vaguely.

"I hear nothing."

Joan insisted.

"Yes; some one who runs fast and calls as he runs."

At this moment Pierre called out:

"I hear father's voice."

And then all present could hear quite plainly a shouting, the sound of which drew nearer. In a few seconds a sturdy old peasant, brown-cheeked and gray-haired, holding a huge axe in his hand, came running through the trees into the clearing, and cried out, panting:

"Soldiers in the distance coming here; they may be Burgundian."

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The girls squealed shrilly at the sound of the dreaded name, and Pierre and Gérardin grew pale. But Joan showed no sign either of surprise or fear. Her father spoke again, gasping as he got his breath:

"To the village! Every man his weapon! The women and cattle to the fortress! They shall not take us unawares."

Pierre and Gérardin were poised for speed when the quiet voice of Joan checked them.

"There will be no Burgundians at Domremy to-day."

She spoke very quietly, but the sound of her voice seemed to irritate Jacques d'Arc, for he strode towards her and spoke wrathfully:

"I dreamed of you last night. You rode hence with armed men."

Joan looked steadfastly into his angry eyes.

"I hope that dream will come true," she said, slowly.

Jacques banged the blade of his axe against the palm of his left hand.

"What have I done that my child should be such a jade?" he raved.

Joan seemed more sorry for her father than scared by his rage, as she answered:

"You do not understand, father. But you will understand one day."

The old man screamed at her:

"I understand well enough. You want to be a camp-follower, a soldier's drab."

Joan shuddered a little at his words, but she only said:

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"You mistake, father."

Jacques turned from Joan to where the others stood, surveying the altercation in frightened silence.

"Look here, Pierre," he commanded; "look at your sister who wants to go with soldiers. If I thought such shame could come I would bid you drown her."

Pierre made bold to look appealingly at his sire.

"Father," he protested. But Jacques stormed on:

"Ay, and if your heart failed, I would drown her with my own hands."

Joan stood very still, looking straight before her.

"My mother would not drown me," she said, more to herself than to the rest.

Jacques d'Arc did not hear, or at least did not heed her. He addressed the others in repetition of his warning.

"Quick, friends, to the village!" And on those words he left them, making all speed through the trees to the village. Pierre came close to Joan.

"Do not be angry with father," he pleaded.

Joan smiled cheerfully upon her brother.

"Dear Pierre, how could I be angry with him? If I were in his place I should think very much as he thinks. But when he understands, it will be different."

Pierre looked dubiously at her.

"I take your part, Joan, but I don't understand you."

Joan patted him affectionately upon the back.

"Patience, dear lad; you will, by-and-by."

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Pierre often did not know what to make of Joan, but he always knew that he loved her.

"In the mean time you had better come with us," he advised, sagely.

Joan smiled refusal.

"Have no fear. There will be no Burgundians in Domremy to-day."

Pierre was puzzled, and showed it.

"You think so?"

Joan was sure, and showed it.

"I know."

He guessed that she had said all that she meant to say. He took Hauviette and Mengette by the hands and ran with them through the trees down the slope towards the village. Isabellette crept close to Gérardin and whispered, timidly:

"Will you not come?"

The poor thing hoped he would squire her home, but Gérardin shook her off impatiently.

"By - and - by," he said, shortly, and Isabellette gave him a sad look and went her way alone. When she was quite out of sight, Joan, who had remained silent in the same place, turned her face to the young Burgundian, and her face was dimpled with mirth.

"You are a fool, Gérardin. The girl would make you a good wife."

"You are the wife I want," Gérardin growled. Somehow all his pretty speeches, all his pretty self-assurance, seemed to shrivel into nothingness when he was face to face with Joan. Joan laughed.

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"We scotched that folly before justices at Toul. You cannot wed a girl against her will."

Gérardin, trying to find the right words, found at least some words.

"You are unreasonable. I am a cadet of an honorable house. If I condescend to play with your playmates it is to be near you."

Joan was good-humoredly scornful.

"If you were an emperor, all gold and purple, I keep such company as would find me unmoved by your favor."

Gérardin stared at her.

"What company?"

Joan answered him enigmatically.

"My thoughts." Then she went on: "Now you must not plague me any more, for you may be very sure that my yea means yea, and my nay nay to the end."

She turned to go away from him, making for the little path through the trees that led up hill to the house of Our Lady of Domremy. Gérardin guessed her purpose.

"Let me go with you to the shrine," he entreated.

Joan denied him, decisively.

"I like to be alone. Go after Isabellette and be kind to her."

She stood where she was and watched him till he obeyed her and slunk away towards the village. Then she climbed the hill-path to the chapel, and the clearing of the Fairies' Tree was left empty.

IV

HOW JOAN HEARD VOICES IN THE WOOD

THE clearing lay vacant of human beings for a little while, and the birds chirped unheeded, carolling their gladness at the promise of spring. But presently footsteps came again towards the spot, though not this time from the direction of the village, and then a man and a woman came through the trees. The woman seemed to know well the forest way and to be guiding the man, who followed her with a sneer on his handsome face. Gilles de Laval had got to Domremy before Lahire.

When the Lord of Laval and the lady who masqueraded as his sister came to within a furlong of Domremy, the woman whispered to the man to order a halt. The escort was ordered to ride on to Domremy for rest and refreshment, while the man and woman, leaving their horses in charge of Master Nicholas Loyseleur, my lord's handy man, made their way over a slope of the hill by a path and towards a goal that the woman knew well. That path they had now traversed; that goal they had now reached.

Gilles looked about him curiously.

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"Is this the place your whimsy wished for?" he asked his companion. She answered less his question than the scornful surprise in his voice.

"Is it strange to wish to see my birthplace?"

Gilles shrugged his shoulders. Then he spoke suavely, but menace lurked beneath the suavity of his voice.

"Henceforward be pleased to forget your birthplace, be pleased to forget that you have been my plaything. Remember only that you are my sister, the Lady Catherine of Laval, going to Chinon to meet, and I hope win, your King."

Catherine made an impatient gesture.

"I shall remember. But for the moment I am again the peasant girl who took your fancy. These are the woods I played in, this is the Fairies' Tree."

As she spoke, she pointed to the hollow beech, and her voice was delicately tender at the mention of the Fairies' Tree. Gilles questioned her eagerly:

"Is the tree haunted? Does Messire Satan dwell in it?"

He extended his arms towards the tree as if in adoration and his voice had the accent of a prayer.

"Sathanas, Sathanas, give your servant a sign."

The woman put her hand upon one of his uplifted arms to restrain his appeal. She had long ceased to share his strange beliefs and hopes, and, being wise, kept her peace. But she must needs speak for her dear tree.

"There are no devils here. We children believed

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there were fairies. We children believed many simple things." She sighed as her spirit floated back on the stream of memory. "How I loved this place!"

Gilles jeered at her.

"If you stuck in this sty, you had never known soft silk and fine linen, gold, colored stones, delicate fare, white-fingered ease—"

Catherine's dark face flushed as she contrasted "was" and "is."

"The wine of life does not run very red at Domremy," she said, cynically.

Gilles smiled. "You did well to serve me, though I serve the fiend. I have made you what you are, an exquisite idol of love, a king's idol."

Catherine looked tantalizing.

"It will cross you, dear"—she paused a moment mockingly—"brother, if the King fail to fancy me?"

Gilles made a gesture as if he swept all doubts from his path.

"He must, he will. If I loved you well enough to spare your life—for the girls I favored, sweet"—he also paused mockingly—"sister, had a way of dying young—the little King will love you well enough to surrender his wits to your keeping."

Catherine answered, impatiently: "I shall do my best to snare the bird."

She was all of a tumult internally at the sight of her old playground, and sorrowed for the past and fretted for the future. Gilles was tired of the sentimental episode.

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"Shall we go?" he asked. Catherine shook her head wistfully.

"I wish I could learn something of my people. But I dare not go into the village. All think me dead at Domremy."

Now it so chanced that on the very moment Joan, having finished her orisons and laid her garland of flowers on the shrine of Our Lady of Domremy, came out of the little chapel on the edge of the hill, and started to descend the foot-path. Gilles saw her at once, a slender figure in scarlet, and pointed her out to Catherine.

"Here comes one that may serve you," he said. "She must have been a child when you left."

Even as he spoke, Joan had descended the hill to within a few feet of the strangers. Catherine advanced towards her, concealing her face somewhat in the folds of her veil. In hesitating tones Catherine called to the girl:

"Are you of Domremy?"

Joan came to a halt and looked tranquilly at her questioner.

"I am," she answered.

"How does it thrive?" Catherine asked, in a low voice. Joan replied to her, with the ready courtesy of the peasant pleased to find strangers interested in the welfare of the village.

"Well enough. Once the Burgundians burned us out; but we have been spared of late, God be thanked."

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Catherine came a little nearer to Joan, made as if to speak, hesitated, then finally asked:

"There was a family of Arc at Domremy?"

"Was and is," Joan answered, bluntly. She was wondering why this fine lady questioned about her people.

Catherine went on. "How many are they in family?"

"Father, mother, three sons, and a daughter," Joan answered, civilly but curtly. Now Gilles put in his word with a malicious glance at Catherine.

"I thought there were two daughters."

"There were two," Joan answered. "The elder died in service abroad many years ago."

"How is little Joan?" Catherine asked, almost in a whisper. Joan laughed pleasantly.

"Little Joan is big Joan now. I am Joan."

Catherine gave a cry and made a movement as if to advance and clasp the girl in her arms. Gilles caught her by the arm and held her back. "Beware!" he whispered. Tears flooded Catherine's eyes. She turned away and moved slowly through the trees with her hands pressed to her breast. Gilles stood watching Joan admiringly. Here was not the kind of beauty that had lured him those years ago at Vaucouleurs, but here was another charm that appealed to all that was poet in him—youth, strength, health, simplicity. He admired the girl's lithe body, the bright, calm face, with its mysterious loveliness, the keen eyes that met his admiring gaze so steadily; he

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saluted in her the candid dawn, and cherished confused desires.

"You are a comely girl," he said, with the composed insolence of one who takes it for granted that his praise will be welcome. "Would you not like to leave Domremy?"

Joan answered him shortly, heedless of his praising words and gaze.

"I mean to leave Domremy."

Gilles, with gleaming eyes, came a little nearer to her.

"Would you leave Domremy with me?" he asked, eagerly. And when Joan shook her head, "Why not with me?" he persisted.

In his eagerness he did not notice that Joan's straight body seemed to stiffen, that her soft face seemed to harden into a masklike rigidity, that her eyes stared strangely. Then she cried at him, in a great voice that startled him, and brought Catherine running to his side:

"You are God's enemy!"

Catherine held out her hands to the girl in alarmed appeal.

"Why do you speak so?" she wailed.

Joan answered her, keeping very still, and her voice was measured and menacing.

"I speak my mind to God's enemies." Her eyes were still fixed on Gilles, and she spoke to him now.

"I never saw you before, but I shall see you again.

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I wish I had never seen you. About you float dim, evil figures, the shadows of great sins."

All the superstitions to which he was a victim besieged Gilles's fancy, and he glanced involuntarily round as if indeed there might be visible presences behind him, the apparitions of those evil spirits to whom he had so long appealed. He saw nothing, yet he felt sure the girl saw, and he shuddered. The quiet of the place, the steady gaze of the rapt girl, the pitiful sobbing of Catherine racked his nerves and unmanned him.

"The girl is crazy," he gasped, hoarsely, to Catherine. "Come, lady, come." Catching the weeping woman by the arm, he dragged rather than led her across the grass and among the trees, till he came to the path by which they had ascended, and down which they now departed with all speed, leaving Joan alone.

Still as one in a trance, or as one that walks in sleep, Joan advanced towards the Fairies' Tree, then, pausing, crossed herself and slowly sank upon her knees in pious adoration.

"Holy voices, sweet voices," she cried, aloud—"I hear you!"

It now seemed to the kneeling girl as if a great white light of almost unbearable brilliancy blazed within the hollow of the Fairies' Tree, and that presently there appeared to her out of the heart of that effulgence the sacred form of Saint Catherine, in flowing robes of jewelled splendor, her head crowned

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with a precious crown. Then it seemed to Joan that the vision called to her in a sweet, clear voice:

“Joan of Arc, Joan of Arc, Joan of Arc, this is the day foretold!”

Then it seemed to the kneeling girl that she answered and said:

“Blessed Saint Catherine, the day is growing old.”

Herseemed that the saint answered her encouragingly: “The day is not yet done. One comes who shall bring you to the King.”

Therewith the image of Saint Catherine seemed to fade away, as Joan cried out in the fulness of her heart, “Sweet Saint Catherine, I thank thee!” But still the white light glowed in the core of the ancient tree and presently there appeared to the kneeling maid, out of the heart of that effulgence, the sacred form of Saint Margaret, draped in flowing robes of jewelled splendor, and her head crowned with a precious crown. Then it seemed to Joan that the vision called to her in a sweet, clear voice:

“Joan of Arc, Joan of Arc, Joan of Arc, when you see the King he will ask for a sign.”

Then it seemed to the kneeling girl that she answered and said:

“What shall I do?”

Herseemed that the saint answered her encouragingly: “You shall bid him exalt his heart, for he is the rightful King.”

Therewith the image of Saint Margaret seemed to fade away, as Joan cried out, in the fulness of her heart,

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"Sweet Saint Margaret, I thank thee!" But still the white light glowed in the core of the ancient tree, and presently there appeared to the kneeling maid, out of the heart of that effulgence, the sacred form of Saint Michael, gloriously panoplied in golden armor and holding a great sword whose blade appeared to be forged of celestial fire, that gleamed and quivered. Then it seemed to Joan that the vision called to her in a sweet, clear voice:

"Joan of Arc, Joan of Arc, Joan of Arc, you shall save France when you find the sword that shall give you victory."

Then it seemed to the kneeling girl that she answered and said:

"Where shall I find that sword?"

Herseemed that the saint answered her encouragingly: "Behind the altar of the church at Fierbois."

Therewith the image of Saint Michael seemed to fade away, as Joan cried out, in the fulness of her heart, "Sweet Saint Michael, I thank thee!" and the white light vanished from the core of the ancient tree. But Joan remained kneeling in prayer, rigid and immobile, heedless if minutes or hours wheeled around her, conscious only of the rapturous ecstasy of the visions that had been vouchsafed to her and the dread duty that had been laid upon her young shoulders.

V

HOW LAHIRE FOUND A WONDER IN A WOOD

THE quiet air was stirred by a snatch of song. A man was climbing the hill-side and singing merrily to himself as he climbed for sheer lightness of heart, like a chirping bird. The voice was rough, and none too tunable; it had shouted too many war-cries with quite unnecessary bluster, too many commands with quite unnecessary fierceness, to retain much of the dulcet shrillness of your wandering minstrel. But the words and the air sounded pleasantly in the greenwood, and these were the words that made the burden of the song:

“Love has filled my heart to the brim;
Take my heart in your fingers, dearie.”

Thus carolling and climbing, the new-comer made his way through the trees into the clearing. He was habited in battered armor; over the body he wore a tattered tabard of black silk, embroidered in tarnished gold with his device—three laurel leaves, two and one. He had left his helmet below in the village, where he had halted his men, and his slightly grizzled hair was covered by a cap of faded black velvet. He

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had ridden into Domremy at the head of his men soon after the Lord of Laval had ridden out of it. In the village he had heard of the Fairies' Tree, and the humor took him to go and look at it. So he had climbed the hill, singing and whistling, and now he had found the tree, and lo! there was a fair girl kneeling at its foot as if in prayer. Lahire paused, and stopped his singing, but to his surprise the girl did not move from her kneeling position, did not give any sign of being conscious of his presence. Lahire tiptoed delicately forward and stared at her.

"Body and blood!" he cried. "What is this? Hola, pretty petitioner, give me a gap in your prayers."

He paused to see what effect his eloquence would have upon the girl; as it apparently had none, he resumed:

"You will wear a hole in the ground if you kneel so persistently."

Again he paused and still the girl remained motionless, which vexed him.

"God's mercy!" he shouted; "are you dead or dreaming, that you keep so still?"

He came quite close to her now and stared into her upturned, fixed face.

"A comely supplicant, by the rood," he ejaculated; then, finding the girl still rigid and indifferent to his praises, he continued:

"Sweet penitent, if you do not find tongue to answer me, I will lift you to my lips and kiss you for absolution."

HOW LAHIRE FOUND A WONDER

Doubtless he would have done as he said, but at that moment the girl seemed to come out of the state of trance or catalepsy which had up till then governed her. She crossed herself reverently, and then, rising to her feet, faced Lahire calmly, and astonished him with her greeting.

"You are very welcome, soldier."

Lahire gazed at her open-mouthed.

"By Peter's beard," he grunted, "here is a fire-hot greeting to a man you have never seen before."

Joan was studying his face, his person, his accoutrements, with eyes of curious recognition.

"I have seen you before," she asserted, with a simple directness that staggered her listener.

"Nay, nay, maiden," said Lahire, wagging his head wisely, "that can scarcely be, for this is my first time in these parts, and, though I confess myself and profess myself a liberal lover of ladies, I should recall your fair face in a thousand."

Lahire would have plied the girl with flattering words had she been as homely as a hedge-fence, for that was a part of his profession as soldier, but in this instance he spoke with all sincerity. He had seen many faces more beautiful than the face now looking so steadily at him, but never a face so noble, so serenely bright, never a face at once so winning, inspiring, and inspired. Joan was looking at him as she would have looked at an old friend while she answered him.

"I saw you yesterday."

"Where?" Lahire asked, sharply. He suspected

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some mystification, at least some rustic jest, at his expense, but the girl faced him so frankly that he was bewildered.

"I cannot tell you where it was," Joan said. "I do not know the place. It was a hollow between two hills, with a wood at the valley's mouth."

Now the peasant girl was painting for the soldier a true picture of what she had seen in a queer kind of day-dream on the previous afternoon. Her shaft hit Lahire in the gold of his heart's target. "The devil!" he whistled. A slight frown shadowed the brow of the peasant girl.

"Hush!" she said, with a sternness remarkable in one so young and so gentle-seeming. Lahire stared at her manner, but held his peace, and Joan went on:

"You came riding down the valley at the head of your troop. You were singing a song." And she began to recite the burden of Lahire's love-ditty—

"Love has filled my heart to the brim"—

Lahire caught at the words and continued them:

"Take my heart in your fingers, dearie."

He stopped his singing.

"Go on," he said, full of wonder.

Joan continued:

"The wood ahead of you was thick with armed men. I could see the sun on their helmets, though you could not, and I longed to warn you."

HOW LAHIRE FOUND A WONDER

Lahire made her a salutation.

"Very obliging of you. Who told you this tale?"

Joan answered him with some asperity in her voice.

"I tell you I saw. Though you came along care-
less, of a sudden you took alarm and drew rein."

Lahire admitted this instantly.

"I saw leaves stir when there was no wind."

Joan went on with her story:

"Then came a flight of arrows, and some of your
men fell—one just behind you, that carried some
yellow flowers in his hand."

Lahire sighed for a brave comrade.

"That was Geoffroi de Vannes."

Joan continued, heedless of interruptions that were
the justifications of her tale.

"A bunch of Burgundians tumbled out of the wood,
shouting. There was fighting for a while, and much
dust and many cries, and then you won out, for your
enemies fled, and you went your way with your
wounded."

Lahire came very close to the girl and looked
steadily into her untroubled eyes. The girl did not
shrink in any way from his scrutiny.

"How were you at Bar-le-Vallon yesterday," he
questioned, "who are here to-day?"

"I have not left Domremy," the girl answered, qui-
etly. A thought seemed to strike the soldier. "Has
some Burgundian fugitive been here?"

Joan made an impatient gesture of dissent.

"I have seen none such. He would scarcely come

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here. Domremy is Armagnac. Domremy is for the Dauphin, whom God preserve."

Lahire felt that he was being mystified, and his irritation grew.

"Then, in the name of Saint Nicholas and the twenty tribes of thieves," he shouted, "how did you learn all this?"

Joan answered as before:

"I saw it."

Lahire frowned.

"You play the fool with me—a sport two can play at. If you will tease me, I will towse you, merry shepherdess."

And as he spoke he came a little nearer and made as if he would lay hands upon her. But she kept her ground so still, and gazed at him so bravely with her great eyes, that he felt at a loss and kept his hands to himself.

"I do not fear you," the girl said, "for your eyes are honest, though your speech is lewd. Besides, you have been sent hither to me."

Lahire's irritation had drifted away and given place to amused bewilderment.

"Have I so? Who sent me, pray?" It was very clear to him that no part of the business of his marauding expedition to raise moneys for the King with the strong hand had any concern with a country-side lass. The idea tickled him, and he allowed himself to grin.

Joan reverently crossed herself as she answered his question.

HOW LAHIRE FOUND A WONDER

"The blessed saints Michael and Catherine and Margaret."

Lahire's grin grew ripe and lusty, then suddenly became a full-throated guffaw.

"Lord!" he cried, with the tears of mirth brimming his eyes, "I did not know I served such captains. Pass for Saint Michael, they say he is a very soldierly angel, and now that Saint Denis is kept prisoner in Paris by the English he may well serve for our patron saint. But for my Lady Catherine or my Lady Margaret, why, I cannot see myself serving under a woman."

"You will serve under a woman soon," Maid Joan said, with quiet decision.

Lahire's laughter steadily waxed. "Shall I so? There is nothing like knowing. Why shall I do this?"

"The woman will save France," Joan said, and her face shone as she spoke.

Lahire's face brightened and his mirth died down a little. "The devil she will! Bring her along. I would serve under a child or a kitten or a monkey that would save France. But I have ridden far and lived hard, and heard naught of such a woman."

"I shall save France," Joan said, with the same tone of quiet conviction as that with which she might have told him the time of the day from her rustic knowledge of the signs of the sky.

Now Lahire's fading mirth flared up again. The girl was comely to behold—there was no doubt of that—and sweet of speech—there was no doubt of

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that, neither—but she was clean daft, clearly witless, imbecile, demented, a natural, an idiot, as mad as any hare of March.

“Of course,” he pretended to agree, drolling her, “just what a peasant wench would do. I had a mind to kiss you ere I went, but your wits are weak, and I will not vex you.”

The girl showed no surprise nor vexation at the man’s mockery.

“I am not mad. I have told you what I saw yesterday; I have told you what I heard to-day. Though no one else believes me, you must believe me.”

Lahire began to be annoyed at the girl’s persistence, the more annoyed because he began dimly to appreciate that there was matter too pathetic for mirth.

“Why should I believe you? Because you say that you saw me yesterday, fighting thirty leagues away? You may have the second sight, or you may be lying. Neither is uncommon.”

“Do you not know the prophecy of Merlin,” Joan asked him—“that a woman should lose France and that a maid should save France?”

“I have heard some such tale,” Lahire admitted, “and truly the she-wolf Isabella has done her worst to ruin France; but as for the saving maid, why, you are a Lorrainer, and when came any good thing out of Lorraine?”

“I am not of Lorraine,” the girl argued—“I live on the French side of the stream. My saints assure

HOW LAHIRE FOUND A WONDER

me that you will help me to Chinon, to speech with the Dauphin."

Lahire began to smile again.

"I think the little King would laugh if I came to him with a mad lass in tow."

"I am not mad," the girl reasserted, patiently. "I do not know who you are, but I know somewhat of you that none know, and I know also that you must serve me in my work."

"For your not knowing who I am," said the soldier, "that is easily remedied. Men call me Lahire."

Joan looked strangely at the famous free-lance, whose reckless daring was the familiar tale of France.

"Lahire!" she cried. "Men call you the bravest of the brave; but you are not brave."

A fierce flush reddened the soldier's face instantly, and then as swiftly ebbed away, leaving him very pale.

"He were a brave man that should say so much to me," he stammered. His lips were quivering, and his fingers twitched nervously.

"I tell you the truth," the girl said, "that you may believe in me. When the enemy came on you yesterday your first impulse was to turn bridle and ride for your life."

VI

HOW JOAN FOUND A FRIEND

THERE was a long pause while the soldier stared at the grave maid, and the warm color came slowly back to his brown cheeks. Then he said, reluctantly, as one that confesses against his will:

“That was my first thought.” He looked at the girl eagerly in exculpation. “But I conquered it.”

Joan seemed to be listening not so much to the soldier as to some utterance that he could not hear.

“My voices tell me,” she said, soothingly, “that you always conquer that thought.”

The soldier of fortune was now more inclined to pay a tribute of respect to the claims of the girl.

“They are wise voices, and tell you my life’s secret. Faith, I little thought when I strolled hither to look at your Fairies’ Tree that I should meet with so cunning a soothsayer. Let us sit side by side awhile and make friends, shepherdess.”

He pointed to the trunk of a fallen oak that lay not far from the foot of the fairies’ beech, and in another minute the man and the maid were sitting

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side by side on the rustic seat like old friends. Joan corrected the soldier's error.

"I only tend the sheep now and then. I have too much to do at home."

Lahire forthwith amended his address to the discretion of his companion.

"Then let us make friends, housewife, and talk neighborly.

"Why are you a soldier if you fear such fear?" Joan asked, thoughtfully.

Lahire made a grimace. "Cannot your voices tell you?" he questioned, half mocking, but Joan answered him in all sincerity:

"I hear nothing."

"Then I will tell you all about it," said Lahire. "I was a timid child. The wolf-world grinned at me, and I shivered at its teeth. Priest seemed my part in life, which is why I write a clerk's hand and patter Latin to this day. If an owl hooted I shuddered. If a playmate raised his hand I ducked my head. It was peril of my life to pass a herd of cattle."

"Poor child!" Joan murmured, sympathetically. "It must be bitter to have such a spirit."

"So bitter," Lahire agreed, "that one day I took such hate of my base nature that I swore to force myself into every peril, to take part in any brawl. At worst, I should die a man's death; at best, learn to wear a front of brass. I did learn. I flogged my coward body into battles, forswore Latinity, and took to my fists. If ever a soldier was made

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that was not born to the art, I am he. My spirit was as soft as the paste they make cakes of, but I set myself to stiffen it. While my blood froze I earned a name for daring; though my heart was clean enough, I backed my dastard's sword with brags, out-swaggered all swaggerers, was ever the foremost foul mouth in the fellowship of the foul. My valor is a sham and my blasphemy a mask, but I have worn both so long that they are second skins, and I bear a name for daring."

Joan rested her hand for a moment gently upon his arm.

"You have the soul of a soldier."

"In the body of a poltroon," Lahire retorted. "Even now when swords are lifted my first impulse is to cringe. Though my name spells rape and pillage, I could blush to see a maid bathing in a stream, or cry with a child that cried for a broken toy." He broke off abruptly in his strange confession and patted the girl's sunburned hand. "Come," he said, "now you know me, turn about—let me know you."

The girl looked up trustingly at the soldier who had just confessed himself so strangely.

"There is little to tell. My name is Joan. My father is Jacques d'Arc of Domremy. I do not know A from B, but my mother has taught me to spin and weave and sew as well as any maid in these parts."

The adventurer could not help smiling at the naïve pride with which the girl enumerated her little domestic accomplishments, she who a few short minutes be-

HOW JOAN FOUND A FRIEND

fore had been claiming the commission from Heaven to help France.

"Excellent gifts," he admitted; "but how shall these same gifts save France?"

The girl showed no offence at his jesting tone. She was too strong in her confidence for any disbelief to vex her, least of all from one she was very sure must so soon believe.

"Patience, friend, patience, and I will tell you all—tell you what I have told to no one in the world, not even to my mother, for I know that I am to tell you, and that you will hear and believe."

Lahire pressed his lips tightly together, but he said nothing, and the girl went on.

"One day, four years ago, in the garden, a great white light shone on me, such as I had never seen before, so bright that it dazzled me where I stood among the currant-bushes, and I trembled with a fear that was also joy. Do you understand that?"

Lahire, watching her, nodded.

"I think I can understand that."

Joan went on.

"Then, I know not how, the light seemed to become a voice, so sweet that it was sweeter than the song of any bird I ever heard, or even the blessed music of the mass, and the voice called me by my name and bade me be good and go often to the church."

"Did you obey, comrade?" Lahire asked, soberly. He did not know what to make of this strange child, but he knew that he liked her and wished her

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to go on talking to him in her strong, melodious speech.

"Surely," Joan answered, emphatically. "All my life"—she spoke as if she were old and gray, who was so young and fair—"all my life it has been my greatest happiness to go to church and pray and pray and pray."

Lahire stared at her amazed. Such had never been his dream of pleasure even in those timid days of preparation to be priest. "Well," he said, wondering.

The girl went on. "What sweeter music is there," she asked, clasping and unclasping her strong hands, "than the music of church-bells? what sweeter stories than the stories of the blessed saints? what sweeter perfume than the incense pouring from the censer in the holy place?"

Lahire did not know what to say. His ideas of delights were very different. But through the hide of his sensuality his heart was touched by the girl's simple faith. Also he was curious to know more.

"Did the light come again?" he asked.

"The white light and the white voice came to me often, always when I was alone, in the stillness of the fields, in the quiet of the garden. By-and-by, even as the light became a voice, so the voice seemed to take shape and become a bodily presence."

"What was the presence like?" the soldier asked. He was beginning to feel a thought awed by the girl's tale and the quiet, assured way in which she told it. He had never himself seen any apparitions, but he

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was not unready to believe that others might see them, and this girl had strange gifts and knowledge.

“Now it was like a woman, with a precious crown upon her head, and wonderful flowing robes of many colors, and by her side there was a wheel with cruel spikes in it, and then I knew it for the blessed Saint Catherine, and still she bade me be good and trust in God. And another time the voice took form and again it was like a woman, with a precious crown upon her head, and because of the pearls in her diadem I knew her for Saint Margaret, and still she bade me be good and trust in God. And yet again, one day, the light seemed to quiver with countless wings, and in the midst I saw the figure of a gallant gentleman in golden armor, and by his flaming sword I knew him for Saint Michael, that overthrew Lucifer, and still he bade me be good and trust in God.”

She paused in her speaking, placed her hand on Lahire's knee, and looked anxiously into his perplexed face.

“You believe I saw and heard?” she entreated. Lahire did not know what to say. “I believe you believe, comrade,” he said, at length, and the girl, seeming satisfied, resumed.

“After a while the saints began to speak to me of the great pity that there was for the fair realm of France, and to bid me go into France; and when I sought to know what I should do in France, Saint Michael told me that I was to help the King of France and give him back his kingdom. I was abashed, and

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said I was but a poor girl that could not ride nor lead armed men. But the saint bade me go to Vaucouleurs and tell my tale to the Lord Baudricourt."

"Old ruffian Baudricourt," Lahire said, with a laugh. "How did he greet you?"

He was thinking that if this strange tale amazed him, that had been clerklly bred and lettered, how much it must have amazed the old war-savage that held Vaucouleurs for the King."

"He laughed and packed me home," Joan said, with a sigh, "and father was very angry and mother sad. But my voices keep me to my task, and to-day they told me one was coming this way who would help me to see the King. You believe me?"

"Devil damn me if I know what to believe," growled Lahire, scratching his ear. "Look here, housewife, supposing I did help you to the King, what would you do then?"

"I would tell him," the girl answered, assuredly, "that Heaven had sent me to him to lead his armies, that I might raise the siege of Orleans and crown him King at Rheims, and drive the English forth from France."

"No more than that?" Lahire said, and whistled.

The girl knit her dark brows. "Why do you stare at me so?" she asked, quite imperiously.

Lahire answered, bluntly: "I am all mazed and muddled to see you so modest and honest, and to hear you talk such monstrous folly."

Joan took his words without anger.

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"It is no folly, but God's own truth through the voice of His angels. I will go to the Dauphin if I have to go from here to Chinon on my knees. But I bid you, if you believe in God, if you believe in God's angels, then believe in me."

Lahire nibbled the tips of his fingers as one in a quandary.

"But if I believe, if the King believe, you will be no better off. It is not what the King thinks, but what my Lord of Tremouille and my Lord Gilles of Laval think that rules at Chinon. My Lord of Tremouille and my Lord Gilles of Laval are all for terms with Burgundy and things as they are. You would never convince my Lord of Tremouille or my Lord Gilles of Laval."

Joan reassured him with a proud confidence.

"All will go well when I have seen the Dauphin. If you will help me to this, you will be glad of it all your life, for the young year will not be old before France is saved."

There was a ring in her voice that stirred Lahire as he had never been stirred before in all his marauding days. He sprang to his feet, and the girl rose with him.

"By Job's bones, I'll risk it. There, both my hands, knightly fashion, I swear to help you to the King. But if you fail I am the laughing-stock of France."

He thrust out his big, brown hands as he spoke, and Joan took them in her hands, which were brown too, and big for a girl.

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"I shall not fail," she said, and said no more; but her simple directness strengthened Lahire's purpose.

"Go to Vaucouleurs again," Lahire said. "I will tell old ruffian Baudricourt to help you. I will leave the best of my men there to escort you across country. When you come to Chinon I will bring you to the King."

Joan shook his hands again before releasing them.

"Friend Lahire, you are the best fellow in France."

Lahire grinned.

"You are the most wonderful girl in France to make me do as I do. But, Housewife Joan, you will find it ill travelling—a girl among troopers."

The girl had prepared for that difficulty.

"I will go as a man in my brother's gear. I must choose a good time, for if my father knew he would not let me go."

"Will you disobey your father?" Lahire asked, teasing.

Joan made the sign of the cross.

"I will obey my Father in heaven."

"Well," said Lahire, abashed and baffled by her calm, "I must get back to my men."

He turned to go, and then came back.

"You do not ask me if I will keep my promise."

"Why should I?" said Joan. "I know you will keep your promise."

Lahire's face brightened. He gave the girl a military salute, then turned and tramped his way

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through the trees to Domremy. Joan fell on her knees before the Fairies' Tree, and it seemed she saw the vision of Saint Michael appear in the tree, in a white light that quivered with wings, his hands outstretched in benediction.

VII

HOW DOM GREGORY KEPT CHRONICLE

EVERY ONE who knows a little about the age of Charles the Seventh is vaguely aware that one Jean Chartier wrote a chronicle of the reign. But very few, indeed, know that another Chartier, Jean Chartier's brother, a much more famous person, and the first poet of France in the fifteenth century, friend, adviser, and secretary to Charles the Well-served, the ill-favored singer whom a queen kissed as he slept, also wrote a chronicle of a portion of his royal master's reign. It was a rhyming chronicle dealing with the coming to court of the Maid of Domremy and her subsequent fortunes and final fate. It is believed to have been much admired by the few whom the poet allowed to read it; believed, we say, because for some reason Alain Chartier did not accord it the publicity of distribution in multiplied manuscripts, and after his death the poet's own sole copy disappeared from the world, as it would seem, for good. Some have asserted that Master Alain, conceiving his treatment unworthy of his theme, and more resolute than Maro with his *Æneids*,

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destroyed his handiwork before surrendering to the Great Destroyer. Others believed that it was buried with him in his tomb, in blissful Avignon, where he sleeps.

However it may be, it seems fairly certain that at least one copy of the chronicle persisted after the death of the chronicler. There exists in the Abbey of Bonne Aventure, in Boitou, not indeed a copy of Alain Chartier's manuscript, but a manuscript in the handwriting of the learned and indefatigable Dom Gregory, which is avowedly a presentation in plain prose of the narrative which Alain Chartier had conceived and executed in verse. There is, of course, no means of knowing, firstly, how far Dom Gregory was faithful to his original, or, secondly, how far Master Alain in his original composition allowed his fancy to be fettered by the cold and fatal sequence of the things that really happened.

All that can be maintained is that Dom Gregory's abridgment or prosification of his original does set forth some episodes of a troublous time, after a fashion unfamiliar to the general historian, and that his statements, often surprising as they are, do not seem to be wholly inconsistent with what we know for certain of the age, and may really be valuable contemporary evidence transmitted to us, and possibly blurred and confused in the transmission by Dom Gregory's patient pen. At least, it is the basis and justification of whatever is unfamiliar in this narrative.

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According to Dom Gregory, who would seem to have had it from Chartier, who had it from Lahire, who had it from the men he left, as he had promised, at Vaucouleurs, things fell out thus: Lahire left two of his best men, Gascons both, to wait for the Maid. These were Bertrand de Poulengy and Jean de Novelonpont, high-cheeked firebrands, one in the summer, one in the autumn of existence, their lineage as honorable as their exchequer was empty, the mode of Gascon gentlemen then and thereafter. With each of these freebooters Lahire left two lancers, strong fellows of their hands, the most he could spare, six stout soldiers from his little fellowship of marauders. He had a word with Robert of Baudricourt before he left; no one knows what the word was, but Lahire outroared Robert as a lion outroars a bull, and the outcome of it was that the Lord of Baudricourt agreed that whosoever should come to him at Vaucouleurs, whether from Domremy or from the devil, bearing a letter from him, Lahire, was to be well entreated and favored and aided. On this agreement ruffian Baudricourt and ruffian Lahire parted good friends, and Lahire and his rascals clattered away, pillaging gayly and making their way leisurely and pleasantly to Chinon.

By-and-by Joan came to Vaucouleurs, clad in jerkin and hose of her brother Pierre's; sought and gained audience of old ruffian Baudricourt, gave him Lahire's letter, and gained, if not his belief, at least his service. He gave her a horse, he gave her some

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pieces of armor. He would have given her some money even, so well did he respect a friend of Lahire's, but Joan would none of it. He offered her good counsel, to which she listened without listening. Her mind was made up, and she had no time to waste on trifles. "My voices will tell me how to ride and where to halt and why to be wary," she said to her Gascon squires, who both adored her, to their great surprise, in a very un-Gascon spirit of respectful adoration. She had to linger some little time in Vaucouleurs, for Baudricourt, with all his willingness to oblige Lahire, was so boggled by the element of mysticism suddenly imported into purely military business that he made such delay as he durst venture, while he had clerical intelligence brought to bear upon the Maid. But the Maid met all the inquiries of the Church so simply and directly, and showed herself so true a daughter of the faith, and so devout and so clean-spirited, that there was nothing to be done but to believe in her goodness, her purity, and her faith, if not in her sanity. Every moment that she lingered in Vaucouleurs widened the knowledge of her mission and deepened the interest felt in her by the honest people of Vaucouleurs, who came to think of her as little less than saint. The sweetness, the simplicity, the sturdy purpose, the humor that had won Lahire won all hearts in the gray old town, and when the time came at length for Joan to set forth for Chinon, to begin in very fact the adventure that was, if successful, to carry her across so many leagues of dangerous country

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to the feet of the Dauphin, all Vaucouleurs was assembled to see her depart.

Joan rode on the horse that Baudricourt had given her. By her side rode ripe Bertrand de Poulengy and Jean de Novelonpont, mellow to maturity. At their heels came the four lancers with set faces, not knowing what to make of this expedition of which they thoroughly realized the dangers but could not appreciate the possibilities. The whole town was outside the walls: Baudricourt on his big horse, with his men-at-arms about him; the populace, old and young, staring and raising caps and waving kerchiefs, while impish children tumbled and shouted as such children tumbled and shouted when Hector rode forth from Troy or Semiramis rode forth from Nineveh. And by-and-by the little cavalcade were so many small dots in the distance, and Baudricourt and his men-at-arms tramped back within the walls, and old and young the citizens followed his example, and the impish children stopped tumbling and shouting, and came home later, tired and sleepy, to supper and bed. But such of those children as lived to be old, old men and old, old women rejoiced to the last moment of their lives that they had seen that sight of a spring morning, and tried as best they might to recall to eager listeners the lineaments of that bright, serene face in its glow of youth and hope and enterprise. Vaucouleurs never saw the Maid again.

The world knows the history of those following days and nights, when the Maid and her little company

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rode through a thousand perils as scathless as if they had been riders in a circus miming for hire. Through sunlit days and moonlit nights they rode and rode, Joan always ahead, always confident, always cheerful, always good-humored, "never," as one of the lancers said behind his palm to another, "giving herself airs."

Those that rode with Joan of Arc on that wild adventure have left it on record that for all they were hot-headed, hot-hearted soldiers of fortune, neither over-scrupulous nor over-pious, and for all they were journeying in the company of a woman fair and young, and for all their daily and nightly nearness to this woman, no evil thought, no loose desire ever troubled hot head or hot heart. To say that they planned no evil deed would be to say little. The girl was placed in their charge by Lahire, and they knew enough of their leader—they who truly knew so little of him—to know that he would kill them without pity if they misbehaved. But they swore that they cherished no impure thoughts, which meant much coming from such soldiers.

The tale of that ride, through country more than half of which was hostile, has been told a hundred times. Dom Gregory skips it briskly, following, perhaps, his Chartier. Through gloomy woods, by threatened highways, over swollen rivers, the brave seven made their way, as safely, if not as gayly, as if they had been going a-Maying. Joan was always gay; not so always her company, who could not feel

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the confidence she felt, and for long enough expected to end in an ambuscado, or in capture, and perhaps the gallows, for travelling with a witch. They came certainly near to the first peril, and that within an ace of their journey's ending, when they were riding through what should be friendly country. For by this time the rumor of Joan's coming had risen to a bruit, and from thence had grown to be common talk, and people in Orleans as well as people in Chinon knew that a girl was coming towards the King with wonderful proffers of aid from Heaven and the holy saints. There were people in Chinon, as there was especially one person, who would not have welcomed the veritable Archangel Michael himself if he had come riding to Chinon to inspire the King with a martial ardor that must mar pleasant plans for leaving things as they were and standing well with the Duke of Burgundy. So it came to pass that a well-armed gang of rascals tramped out on the road by which the wonder-maid from Domremy was coming to Chinon, and took cover, waiting for game. But it also happened that Lahire was in Chinon and that he, too, got wind of the coming of Joan—and what came of these two facts you will learn later on.

VIII

HOW ALAIN CHARTIER LACKED MATERIAL

THE great hall in the castle of Chinon that looked down upon the valley of the Vienne and the little town at the foot of the hill was almost empty. The King and the court were, where they almost always were on these spring mornings, in the tilt-yard; and where the King and the court were, there all connected with the palace made it their duty and their pleasure to be.

To a stranger the hall would seem at the first blush a very splendid place, with its carved and colored roof all red and blue and gold, with its walls powdered with the lilies of France, with its costly curtains over the different doorways, with its noble hearth-place surmounted by the royal shield, with its stands of armor and its brightly tiled floor. But a keen observer would note that there was dust on the carvings and rust on the armor, that the rich webs of the draperies were somewhat torn and stained, that gold and colors often flaked away from walls and ceiling. Though the hall was chilly, too, in the spring morning, only the ashes of a fire lay on the hearthstone.

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Now the great hall was tenanted only by a scribe at a table and a dark, ill-favored man, with a keen, intelligent countenance, who was walking rapidly up and down the vacant apartment, and pausing now and then to dictate some words to the writer at the table.

Outside, on the sunny terrace, Messire Gontran de Noirmont lounged and yawned. He was on duty for the day, in command of the palace-guard, and the duty irked him exceedingly. His thoughts were on the tilt-yard, and he fretted to have to spend the bright hours in drifting up and down the terrace—hours which might have been more profitably employed in seeing the King win easy victories, and in feasting his eyes upon the beauty of the Lady of Laval.

In his weariness he turned from the futile contemplation of the river and the town, and looked curiously at Master Alain Chartier as he paused and talked to his secretary. Chartier was evidently puzzled, for he halted by the table with a worried look on his face, and rubbed his chin wistfully.

“What to write?” he said. Then, with an effort, he began to dictate to the penman, one Nicholas Loyseleur, whom the Lord Gilles had lent him as a skilful clerk. “Yesterday the King tilted in the lists to the admiration of all—and of the Lady of Laval. To-day the King tilts in the lists, no doubt to the admiration of all—and of the Lady of Laval. Tomorrow the King will tilt in the lists—I can prophesy

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so much, as well as the admiration of all and of the Lady of Laval. Would I could prophesy something better."

Nicholas Loyseleur looked up at Master Chartier with a face discharged of all expression. It was not his business to afford inspiration to the court poet. His business was—though the court poet was not aware of this—to obtain as much information as might be from Master Chartier which might prove directly or indirectly to be of advantage to the Lord of Laval.

Messire Gontran yawned, shook himself, and entered the room. He laid a hand on the poet's shoulder.

"You seem vexed, Master Alain."

"That is true." Chartier turned and looked up with a smile into the handsome, sensual face of the soldier. "I am vexed, Messire Gontran. My chronicle of the reign of King Charles the Seventh promises a petty record."

Gontran beamed the patronage of the man of the sword for the man of the pen.

"The telling shall make the tale."

Chartier shook his head.

"Though it be nobler penned than Quintus Curtius his Alexander, the matter is not so brisk."

Gontran opened his eyes widely. To him the court, such as it was, seemed quite delightful, and he desired no better way of daffing the spring days aside.

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"Matter enough. We love and joust and adore the incomparable Lady of Laval."

Chartier's mobile face darkened, and he lowered his head in melancholy.

"While England and Burgundy divide France and our exchequer is as dry as a soldier's throat at noontide. A bad business, Messire Gontran."

Gontran was indifferent to the griefs that Chartier voiced, but he felt sufficiently irritated by his own position to express sympathy.

"If your spleen frets, I am not merry. I am on service to-day, and must lounge in empty halls and on lonely terraces while the world fills the tilt-yard and worships the Lady of Laval."

Chartier frowned, and replied, sententiously:

"There is more in life than pleasure."

Gontran did not take kindly to philosophy, and he answered, somewhat snappishly:

"Yes, duty, which keeps me here, curse it. Don't preach, master poet."

Then he turned on his heel and tramped heavily down the hall and out onto the terrace, and resumed his pacing up and down. Chartier turned impatiently to Loyseleur.

"Where was I?"

"Desirous to prophesy," Loyseleur answered, looking up at him stolidly.

"Desirous to prophesy," Chartier repeated, and rubbed his chin impatiently. To be a court poet and to be plagued with a conscience seemed to be

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an unreasonable distribution of destinies. He had a hot sense of nationality, a hot sense of loyalty; he longed to be able to adore his King, and it galled him to be denied his longing.

"We are like foolish frogs in a stagnant pool," he grumbled; "we spawn and croak and call it living. If only something would happen to remind us that we are alive and used to take a pride in being brave."

The curtain of a doorway fluttered, a lean, brown hand clawed it back, and a haggard, brown face stared into the chamber. Alain Chartier, muffled in sullen thoughts, did not heed the intruder who had now slipped into the room and showed himself a poor wight in a sorry motley of shabby blue and yellow and a fool's cap, whose assertive comicality contrasted grimly with the lugubrious visage beneath it. Loyseleur noted the man, and knew him for a poor mountebank that clowned and capered in the servants' hall for the delectation of domestics. His antics had never yet earned him the appreciation of a more exalted audience. Now, indeed, he seemed the most miserable merry-andrew that had ever jigged. His eyelids were puffed with crying, his lips twitched dismally; it was evidently a hard job for him to swallow his sobs. Alain Chartier, about to adventure anew upon his chronicle, caught Loyseleur's eye. Loyseleur, consistent to the character for taciturnity that had been bestowed upon him, said nothing. He lifted his pen and pointed with it at the woe-begone droll who stood in the centre of

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the hall shifting his feet and picking at his fingers uneasily, as if afraid to advance farther. Alain Chartier felt a mighty desire to laugh at the abjection and the tatters of the incongruous rascal, but a native pity for the pitiable checked his mirth.

"Well, friend, what do you want?" he questioned, not ungently, and found his gentleness repaid by the instant glow of gratitude in the mummer's eyes. Then the poor thing of shreds and patches flung himself on the floor at Alain's feet with hands upraised, appealing.

"Justice!" he cried, and for the moment his voice was fierce and insistent, but the unfamiliar valor quavered off into a sob.

Chartier motioned to him to rise.

"I am no judge," he said. "Why do you come to me?"

The fellow scrambled to his feet.

"You have the King's ear," he said. "You have written kindly rhymes, and I have sometimes sung them on the highways, and I know that you love French folk and would not wish them wronged."

"It is very true," said Alain, "that I love French folk, and very true that I would not wish them wronged, but you do not tell me your trouble nor how I can help it."

As Chartier spoke, the silk and steel and feathers that made up the better part of Messire Gontran de Noirmont asserted themselves on the sunlit space of white terrace. Instantly the jester's face wrinkled

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with the strife of hate and fear, and for a little while his lips worked inarticulately. But in the end hate had the best of the battle, and gave the trembler speech and the courage to point at Gontran where he lounged.

"The villain has killed my daughter!" and again, "The villain has killed my daughter!" and so stood silent, shaking with terror and hatred. The furious voice, volleying thus from the timid body, startled and shocked Master Chartier.

"Are you mad?" he asked, sternly; but even as he spoke he assured himself that it was not madness which blazed in the man's eyes and raged from his lips. He turned to the window and called loudly, "Messire Gontran, I pray you come hither."

The soldier, hearing the call of a familiar voice, turned from his desultory observation of the landscape and entered the hall. If, as he did so, he noticed the presence of the mountebank, he gave no sign of recognition or of consciousness of his existence as he addressed himself with an inquiring smile to Chartier, who felt at something of a loss.

"This man says that you have slain his daughter."

Gontran, following, as it were, the direction given by Alain's voice, allowed his gaze to travel to the jester, and to rest on him with a look of indifferent contempt.

"The rogue lies," he asserted, quietly. "It was the girl's good luck to win my favor. A black eye, a slim leg, a brisk trip in the dance were her credentials.

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While I knew her she was alive. If she be now dead—well, we are all mortal.”

Messire Gontran emphasized his easy philosophy with a shrug of the shoulders, and wore his disdain with an air. But the sight of his calmness seemed to goad the poor clown to new fury and a new guttering of words. He mouthed at his hearers, pressing his clinched fists against his breast.

“He is a creature of the Lord Gilles of Laval. My child was simple, innocent, a little weak in the wits, maybe, like me, but as comely as I am uncouth, and a rare dancer. This man lured her away, and I sought for her in vain, till suddenly she came back quite mad, and in a little while died, babbling of the Black Mass.”

At those ominous words Chartier started and crossed himself hurriedly. “The Black Mass!” he echoed, with horror in his voice, and turned for explanation, for contradiction, to Gontran.

“What do you say to this?” he asked. The soldier met his inquiring words and anxious eyes with a laugh and a little motion of the hands, as if he were lightly waving the whole unimportant matter away from him.

“Nothing.” Then, for a moment, his smile became sourer. “My Lord of Laval will find means to defend me if I need defence for romping with a pretty girl.”

He affected a yawn, as if in apology for his faint show of menace, and, saluting Master Chartier somewhat ironically, he turned on his heel and returned to

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the terrace. He lingered there for a moment, ostentatiously visible, and then drifted out of sight as his footfalls sounded fainter and fainter on the stones.

Chartier turned with a gloomy countenance to the wretched fellow in blue and yellow. The poet knew well enough that strange things were whispered about Messire Gilles de Laval and his intimates; knew well enough that the worship of Satan thrived and had many votaries; knew well enough that the vile rites of the Black Mass were observed in secret by many who believed that the way to success in this world lay through the Valley of Damnation. But the knowledge was quickened in him, chill and repulsive, by the mountebank's charge and the manner in which it was met by the soldier. He spoke to the trembling father kindly and gently.

"I can do nothing for you. The Lord Gilles of Laval is too powerful. If he champions your daughter's wronger you had better hold your peace, if you care any longer for your life."

A look came over the bleared face of the mummer which made the poet's heart ache. He slipped his hand into his pouch and thoughtfully drew out one of the few coins it sheltered, for Alain Chartier was the poor poet of a pauper court. He pressed the coin into the unresponsive hand of the mountebank.

"Buy a mass for the dead girl."

The mummer's hand closed over the piece of money. He stood for an instant looking wearily at Chartier. Then, "I thank you," he said, dully, and

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so turned and shuffled across the hall and slipped out as piteously as he had slipped in. Chartier looked thoughtfully after him. Loyseleur's face was a blank, as usual, but Loyseleur's mind was busy committing to memory all that had passed, for faithful recapitulation to the Lord of Laval. Chartier muttered, thoughtfully:

"That is scarcely worth noting. Will nothing ever happen? I shall give up my chronicle, Master Nicholas."

As he spoke and sighed, a beautiful woman came onto the terrace, and her appearance roused the listless Gontran into a sudden activity of enthusiasm, and he stiffened himself to greet the Lady of Laval.

"Exquisite lady!" he cried, but Catherine drew back from him with an aversion she did not try to conceal.

"I seek Alain Chartier," she said, coldly.

Gontran swallowed his chagrin as best he might and pointed sulkily into the hall.

"There he is," he said, and, saluting, withdrew to a distant part of the terrace. Catherine entered the hall and came close to Master Chartier, where he mused.

"May I steal some private time," she entreated, prettily. Chartier rose to his feet and saluted respectfully the fair lady who reigned over the King's heart ever since her coming to court a few weeks earlier.

"Ask life and all," he said, and made a sign to

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Loyseleur, who rose and left the room, only to seek hastily for Gilles de Laval and tell him that his sister was holding private talk with the King's poet.

As soon as they were alone, Catherine abruptly questioned Chartier:

"What is this strange tale of a country girl that rides to see the King?"

"The mad maid from Domremy?" Chartier asked and affirmed at the same time.

Catherine clasped her hands tightly.

"It is from Domremy. Her name?"

Chartier made a deprecatory gesture.

"I forget. Some peasant Moll or Meg. She wrote a letter to the King."

"She wrote?" Catherine echoed, in much surprise.

Chartier explained.

"Some clerk in her company. She is a letterless peasant. Should be a copy here." He hunted among the papers on the table, and at last found what he sought. "Yes, Joan of Arc."

Catherine caught at the paper.

"Joan of Arc! Let me see." She read over the letter aloud:

"GENTLE DAUPHIN,—I have ridden a hundred and fifty miles to help you. I have much good news for you.

"JOAN OF ARC."

Chartier listened with an amused smile.

"She claims a call from Heaven to save France. Some poor natural addled by the troubles of the age.

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We do not want her. We have fools enough here as it is."

"Will not the King see her?" Catherine asked, sadly.

(Now by this time Master Loyseleur had found his master; indeed, he came upon him by chance almost immediately after leaving the hall, so it was no coincidence which brought Gilles de Laval at that moment onto the sunlit terrace and so into the hall.)

"Heaven forbid!" said Chartier, in answer to Catherine. Then, seeing Gilles, he cried:

"My lord, you come timely. Your sister asks if the King will see the idiot from Domremy, Jill of Arc."

Catherine corrected him:

"Joan of Arc."

Gilles came between the pair, smiling pleasantly.

"The King will not see the witch," he affirmed, decisively.

Catherine laid a finger on his sleeve. "Brother, a word."

She drew Gilles apart. Chartier, glancing at them, walked to the terrace and appeared to be absorbed in study of the landscape.

Catherine spoke in a low tone to Gilles.

"Why has this been kept from me?"

Gilles shrugged his shoulders, at which Catherine frowned.

"You know this girl is my sister," she said.

Gilles looked at her mockingly.

"You have no sister. I am your only kin."

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Catherine's lips tightened, and she shifted her ground again to the former question.

"Why should she not see the King?"

"I want no harebrained jade here," Gilles answered, scornfully, "raking the King's cool courage to a flame. My Lord of Tremouille and his Grace of Burgundy and I like things as they are."

There was a moment's silence; then Catherine said, slowly and firmly:

"The girl must come to no harm."

Gilles grinned at her.

"Must! Does the King's favorite take that tone? My fair mistress, whom folk think my fair sister, if the truth were known you would suffer."

Catherine looked at him warily, as a cautious swordsman estimates an adversary. There was a note of triumph in her voice.

"Not I alone. In lifting me to the King's lips you have lifted me out of my prison. You have given him to me as your sister; death for you, my lord, as well as me, if this were known. My shame is your safety, my truth your doom. You are in a tangle; beware lest it strangle."

Gilles saw determination in her face. After a pause he said:

"The girl shall be used gently, but she must not meddle with my plans."

Catherine looked steadily at him.

"I am never your enemy, but I am ever her friend. I will serve your interest with the King, make him

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pliant to your will, but there must come no harm to this child through you, directly or indirectly. Is it a bargain?"

Gilles answered, slowly:

"It is a bargain. Now go to the King."

With elaborate courtesy he led Catherine out. When she had gone he turned to Chartier, who left the terrace and joined him.

"My sister's heart is so tender to this maid that I have sworn to treat her gently when she comes to Chinon. But I do not think she will come to Chinon."

Chartier looked at him in surprise.

"Why not?" he asked.

Gilles smiled a malign smile.

"The roads between here and Fierbois are dangerous, thick with banditti, very apt for ambush. Be-like she will ride into a trap and not ride out of it. The blame will lie with England, with Burgundy, and we shall be rid of a vixen."

"You have a ready wit," Chartier commented, enigmatically. Gilles seemed pleased.

"Is it not?" he said, and went his way to the tilt-yard, leaving Chartier to his leisure. It was a perplexed leisure. The poet sat at his table and mused.

"Shall I write about this fool maid?"

He began to frame a sentence: "At this time there came rumor to Chinon of a girl who claimed to be savior of France." He dismissed the idea with impatience.

"Oh no, no! It is too trivial, too pitiful, for my chronicle."

IX

HOW THE MAID CAME TO THE CASTLE

EVEN as he came to this decision a martial figure in battered steel and shabby garments came onto the terrace and looked into the room.

"Master Chartier!" the new-comer cried, lustily, and at the sound of the familiar voice Chartier rose to greet Lahire.

"Valiant Lahire!" he cried, "welcome to Chinon!" and the soldier and the poet clasped hands cordially. Lahire indorsed and emphasized the writer's words.

"Doubly welcome. First, I bring the King gold borrowed from certain towns that seemed a thought lax in loyalty. But second, and better, I bring a girl."

Chartier shook his head.

"Useless. Your absence has put you out of date. His Majesty is wholly devoted to the Lady of Laval."

Lahire gave him a clap on the shoulder that staggered him.

"Hang you, I am no pander. I bring a maid for fighting—I bring the Maid of Domremy."

"The madwoman!" Chartier cried, involuntarily. Lahire frowned.

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"We shall cease friends if you speak so of my maid. Is she mad, I am mad. Is she witch, I am wizard. Her quarrel is my quarrel."

Chartier hurriedly turned to the table and made as if to write.

"A jest for my chronicle. How Lahire believed in an idiot."

Lahire plucked him from his papers and spoke earnestly.

"By God's stars, I believe in her. There be some here that fear her, I think, already. When I knew she was near to Chinon, I and some of my bully-bands rode out to meet her and came upon an ambuscade of rascals waiting for the girl. They were waiting for her still, very still, when the girl passed by."

"Brigands, maybe?" Chartier suggested.

Lahire looked sceptical.

"I think not. I think some one here had a hand in the act. Very likely you know, but I don't ask you. I know your wise way."

"Friend Lahire," said Chartier, "I look on at the great game of life and take no side. Thus I am not against your prophetess from Domremy."

"You would be for her if you saw her," Lahire shouted. "And, by the hand of glory, you shall see her."

"Is she here?" Chartier asked.

Lahire looked mysterious.

"I smuggled her into the castle unknown to every one," he whispered. "She waits my call."

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He went quickly to the terrace and called:

"Hilloa, Joan!—hither."

Then he came back to Chartier.

"We will play hide-and-peek with the damsel. Mark her when she comes."

As lively as a school-boy, Lahire dragged Chartier behind the curtains of a door from which they could see unseen. After a moment a gracious figure came onto the terrace, the figure of a girl dressed in a lad's dress—gray doublet and hose. A black cap, with silver brooch in it, surmounted her hair, that was cut in a round like a soldier's, and she carried a long dagger at her side. At first glance she might very well have passed for a boy, she was so slender and carried herself so erect, and her face was blithe and bright like the face of a fair youth.

She paused for a moment in the sunlight, looking into the room. Then, as she entered, Gontran, lounging on the terrace, saw her and followed her. Chartier whispered, enchanted, to Lahire:

"She has the face of an angel."

At that moment Gontran called:

"You boy, where are you going?"

Joan turned and faced the soldier.

"I seek Messire Lahire," she said, calmly.

Gontran saw now that he addressed a woman.

"Why, 'tis a girl in a boy's coat!" he cried. "Are you the Maid of Domremy? God curse me if you should long deserve that title."

Chartier looked quickly at his companion, and

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saw that his face was pale and his lips twitching. The next moment he felt himself spun aside as if he had been struck by a whirlwind. The whirlwind was Lahire, who had dashed from his hiding-place.

"Damn you!" he yelled at Gontran, and drew his sword.

So fast and furious was the onslaught of Lahire that Gontran had no time to recognize his enemy or note the three gold leaves, the cognizance of the invincible. He had but time to draw his own sword, but before the swords could meet Joan was between the two men and clinging to Lahire.

"Let him bel!" she commanded. She turned to Gontran and looked upon him with a great pity in her face.

"Oh, in God's name, why dost thou blaspheme God, thou who art so near thy death?"

Gontran gaped at her.

"You are mad," he muttered, and could say no more between rage and amazement.

Chartier, who had emerged from the shelter of his curtain, came forward and whispered to Gontran, who had recognized Lahire and looked discomfited.

"Leave us, friend; we must not brawl in the King's house."

Gontran sheathed his sword and went out of the room in silence. Chartier followed him to the terrace and stood looking after him. Lahire put up his blade and turned to Joan with a perplexed face.

"Heaven's mercy, what made you say that?"

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"My voices told me to say it," Joan answered, simply.

"Then why not let me justify them?" Lahire asked, and made as if he would follow Gontran.

Joan caught his arm.

"He will not die by your hand, but he will die soon. Heaven have pity on his soul."

Lahire swallowed restraint.

"No more of the rogue if I may not choke him."

He turned and beckoned to Chartier, who approached.

"Joan, this is Master Alain Chartier, the King's poet. If he be true friend to the King, he will persuade him to see you; and if he be true friend to me, he will find me a room in which to hide you till I have seen his Majesty."

Joan turned to Chartier eagerly.

"The King must see me. I come to save him."

Chartier's eyes were full of admiration, and there was admiration in his voice, though it was not without its note of irony.

"A great phrase, but it rings hopefully, and hope has not come to court this long while, and must be welcomed. So I will find you a shelter."

He quitted the hall, and the Maid and Lahire were alone. Lahire looked at Joan quizzically.

"You are in the lion's den, Joan. Does your heart fail you?"

Joan answered him, placidly:

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"Why should I fear to meet the Dauphin, when I have come all this way to see him?"

Lahire yielded that point.

"I did not mean the King; but 'lion' was wrong. I should have said 'wolf' to fable my Lord of Laval, and 'fox' to fable my Lord of Tremouille."

Joan's face remained tranquil.

"I do not fear wolf, nor fox neither."

"They are to be feared though. Wolf and fox sway the King, and wolf holds more power than ever, for he has a beautiful sister at court."

Joan's eyes widened.

"What has his sister to do with his power?"

Lahire pinched his ear and found himself at a loss.

"Oh, well, his Majesty has a great respect for her judgment, and as she thinks what my Lord of Laval thinks, why—oh, Maid, you have hard work before you."

Joan stretched out her strong hands, that had strengthened with peasant's toil.

"I am used to hard work, and a little more does not frighten me."

"You have confidence in yourself?" Lahire asked, admiring.

Joan crossed herself.

"I have confidence in God."

Lahire felt abashed, and desirous to right himself in Joan's eyes.

"Why, so have I, and say my prayers, too, thus—

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wise: 'Lord, do Thou to Lahire on this day as he would do to Thee were he the Lord and Thou Lahire.'"

Joan could not refrain from laughing at Lahire's blunt theology, but she approved him heartily.

"I have heard worse prayers from preciser lips."

"'Tis the best I can do," asserted Lahire, cheerfully, "and a man can do no more than his best. The Lord knows, and you know, that I am no more than a mask of valor, but the Lord knows, and you know, that if the Lord had willed me otherwise I had been a proper man."

"Sometimes," said Joan, thoughtfully, "what seems is better than what is. Perhaps if a man were to act the part of a saint day in and day out, so that no one ever found him doing other than saintly deeds or speaking other than saintly words, it might well be forgiven him that in his heart the old Adam was lusty. And so if a soldier do but be a soldier bravely, to the great discomfort of his enemies, it need not matter if he thinks his heart to be as white as a daisy."

X

HOW FOLK BRAWLED IN THE KING'S HOUSE

AT this point the little discussion in divinity was very strangely interrupted. The spirit of silence which brooded over the castle in the absence of the King and his company, a silence that had made both the freebooter and the peasant girl feel in the great hall as if they had passed within the walls of a church, this silence was now rudely broken. Not, as might have been expected, by such joyous sounds as would attend upon the return of the King from the tilt-yard, but by a brabble of angry voices and a rattle of angry feet, ever drawing nearer and growing louder as it neared. Had the good people of Chinon risen in revolt against their sovereign lord and made to storm his dwelling-place, some such clamor might have been awakened within the royal walls. Joan stared at Lahire and Lahire stared at Joan.

“What is going on?” the girl asked. “Is such brawling common in the King’s house?”

Lahire, being at a loss how to answer, thought it best to let events answer for themselves, judging that by the increase in volume and proximity of the tumult

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an answer could not be long delayed. In this belief he was instantly justified. The hangings that masked a distant doorway were roughly plucked aside and a little mob of men and women surged into the hall, all furious in gesticulation, voluble of speech, vehement, intemperate.

The throng seemed to be divided into two parties or factions. At the head of one ranged a jolly-bodied, fat-faced fellow with a white cap on his head and a white apron about his middle, who seemed to be addressing eloquent reproaches to the leader of the other camp, a sober and portly citizen who met the complaints of white-cap with many a surly rebuff. Behind the man in white, whom Lahire had now recognized as the head-cook of the King's household, were gathered a number of the royal servants, all seemingly as choleric as their chief, while the sober citizen was supported by other hodden burgesses like himself, flagrantly tradesmen of the town, one of whom that was palish and stooped in the shoulders carried under his arm a fine pair of long, doeskin riding-boots, while another had a rich, ripe, plum-colored face that praised as plainly as ever face did the joy and the glory and the comfort of the juices of the grape.

The clattering and the chattering of the invaders suddenly ceased when they found themselves confronted by a gaunt and forbidding man-at-arms, to whom they showed immediate deference. They took no notice of Joan, who kept in the background and watched the elements of homespun comedy at play.

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Lahire frowned on the assembly with the disapproving scowl natural to a routier faced by a rabble of kitchen folk.

"What is the matter, rascals?" he asked, in accents unfriendly even to menace.

Joan waited, and watched both parties quietly.

At the sight of Lahire and the sound of his voice the crowd paused, uncertain. There was something so truculent about Lahire's bearing that it would have given pause to the valiantest among them, even if Lahire's person had not been familiar and terrible to them all. None of them noted Joan.

Suddenly the cook found voice to say:

"Messire Lahire, every jack-man in the King's loyal kitchen is in a state of mutiny."

Lahire hitched himself onto the table, folded his arms, and looked as judicial as a captain of banditti dividing plunder.

"What is your trouble?" he grunted, twisting his scarred face into contortions that were, as he knew they would be, very terrifying to the malcontents.

But the cook, fired by his grievances, plucked up heart to point at the townfolk and speak.

"There is strife between us of the kitchen and those of the town that should victual us. Can I cook a meal without wood to kindle and viands to heat?"

He turned from his scrutiny of the angry face of the provisioner and addressed himself pathetically to Lahire, who answered him, grinning:

"Not unless you work miracles."

HOW FOLK BRAWLED IN THE KING'S HOUSE

The cook held up his fat hands in the air tragically.

"Then the King's table must go bare, and the end of the world is at hand."

He dropped his chin on his breast and stood like a stricken man. Lahire turned to Joan to explain to her the meaning of all the pother.

"The King's table has grown meagre of late. Alain Chartier rhymed a rhyme when last I sat there." And Lahire began to troll the verses lustily:

"One day Xaintrailles and mad Lahire
Were bid to feast with Charles the King;
A mutton scrag was all their cheer,
And two old pullets tough as string."

Joan burst out laughing at Lahire's manner and his matter, but the words had a very different effect upon the astonished cook.

"Mutton!" he wailed. "Pullets!" he moaned, and he wrung his hands at the thought of those images of well-fed plenty. "You will have no such cheer to-day while this churl denies me," and he levelled a menacing forefinger at the provisioner, who answered him glare for glare. With thumbs stuck in his belt and arms defiantly akimbo, the stubborn merchant offered little satisfaction to the cook.

"Give me pence," he said, "and I will give you flesh."

With tears in his eyes and tears in his voice the cook confessed his helpless case.

"I have no money."

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The pathos of the admission might have moved many—the great dignitary of the kitchen thus, Roman-like, baring his bosom to the stroke of fate—but it had no effect upon the provisioner.

“Then I have no meat,” was his dry retort.

Here the crimson vintner took advantage of his fellow-citizen's bold front and cold phrase. He stepped to his side and parodied him slyly:

“And I have no wine.”

But his pleasure in his pertness, and his party's pleasure in his pertness, was suddenly damped when Lahire turned his frowning face against them, and questioned them thunderously.

“You treasonable fellows, must the King hunger and thirst?”

The frowns of an angry soldier of fortune were discomposing, but the burgesses were many and resolute. Said the provisioner, sententiously:

“He must fast that will not pay for fill.”

The vintner capped this with another aphorism.

“He must go dry that will not pay for drink.”

The two men seemed very well pleased with themselves and their pithy phrases, and their neighbors jogged one another and nodded, as much as to signify what very clever fellows they had got hold of for spokesmen. Before Lahire had quite swallowed his astonishment at this display of independence he that carried the doeskin boots under his arm pushed his way to the front and put in his word.

“‘God save the King’ is a good cry, but ‘God save

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myself' a better. Lo, the King's new riding-boots! Better never left booth. But the King must pay for them or go barefoot."

He had scarce spoken when Lahire was on him like a whirlwind.

"The King fast, the King parch, the King vamp. Give me those boots!"

In vain the boot-maker bleated in protest, "They are my boots!" Before the words were dry upon his lips Lahire had snatched the boots from his hands and with them had aimed such a furious blow at him that, if he had not ducked and skipped, the heels might have staved his head in.

"They are mine—spoils of war!" Lahire shouted. "Knaves, slaves, will you chaffer and haggle with your King?" He turned to Joan in a fine fury. "I have a mind to hang the gang out of hand, faith of Lahire!"

Tradespeople and servants, terrified by a threat which it might very well please a mad man-at-arms to make good, now noticed for the first time the slim youth in the dark habit who came forward to lay a restraining hand on Lahire's arm and to speak restraining words.

"Gently, friend; these men have mouths to feed, as princes have, and feet to boot. Let me speak with them."

The seeming lad quietly, as it were, put Lahire into the background and advanced towards the cook, who looked sourly on the new-comer.

"Who are you, young dandy-prat?" he sniggered.

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"Be civil!" bawled Lahire, "or I'll stew you in your own kettle."

Joan waved a pacifying hand at her champion.

"He will be civil," she asserted, then addressed the cook again: "Give me your griefs."

The cook pulled at his ear dubiously.

"We have all so many griefs here that it would take a month of Sundays to set them forth. But to begin with myself, I have tasted no wage this three months."

The cook's confession unsealed the lips of his companions. The kitchen-wench, a ruddy, buxom piece, with a kind of blowsy comeliness, crept near to Joan, and made great eyes at her while she whispered:

"I sweat in a red kitchen for nothing, pretty gentleman."

Joan only laughed at the affectionate gaze.

"Don't make eyes at me, child; you waste your time. And you?" She turned away from the kitchen-wench and spoke to a tall varlet who had hitherto kept in the background. The varlet sighed, swelled his chest, and called pathetic attention to his shabby habiliments.

"You would not think it to look at me," he wailed. "but once I cut a figure in the King's cast-offs."

Joan nodded good-humoredly.

"Now that I observe you, I note a royal carriage."

The varlet grew more cheerful under the sunshine of sympathy.

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"Is it not? But now the King sets new sleeves to old jerkins and outwears my perquisites."

Joan pretended to look as pained as if she had heard of the loss of a province.

"Unhappy man!" she said. Then she turned to one whose mellowed visage carried a more delicate tint of jovial crimson even than the vintner.

"You seem jolly enough to mock at sorrow."

The butler, lured by Joan's sympathy, admitted:

"I did not fret while the cellar held. But now I have dry throat as well as empty pocket."

Joan prompted his memory jovially.

"The prince had good wine belike?"

The butler nodded.

"And you drank cup for cup with his Highness?"

The butler nodded again. Instantly Joan's voice changed to disdain.

"Then you should be whipped for a thief."

The butler fell back, discomfited at this unexpected comment, but a woman with a basket on her arm took his place and spoke eagerly.

"The King's shirts are ragged, but I wash and mend them gratis."

Joan gave a little cry of approval.

"You dear creature, let me kiss you for that," and she flung her strong arms about the woman and hugged her.

"Oh, the kind gentleman!" sighed the kitchen-wench, envious.

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The washerwoman, better advised from the clasp of Joan's body, mocked her.

"Silly, 'tis no gentleman at all, but only a great girl."

At the sound of the word "girl" the others huddled together, whispering and peeping at Joan, who faced them calmly, a little flushed at the suddenness of the discovery, but brightly resolute. Lahire looked on with open mouth, not understanding the drift of Joan's interposition.

"Whist!" muttered the vintner to the others, masking a red face with a red hand. "Girl! This must be the maid they talk of."

Joan went on with her interrogatory.

"And you, sirs?" she said to the townfolk—"what is your complaint?"

The provisioner was the first to pull himself together from the surprise of finding himself face to face with the much-talked-of maid from Domremy. He gave Joan a clumsy salutation and voiced his sorrow:

"The King owes me months of money. I must think of wife and child."

The vintner backed him up swiftly.

"If I am not paid my debts, my people starve, and I with them."

The boot-maker followed the lead.

"The King is the first man in France. Let the King be honest."

The other tradesfolk grumbled inarticulately, willing to be represented by their chiefs, and gaping at

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the girl in male apparel. Lahire found his voice of a sudden and was for taking the boot-maker by the ear.

"You snap-dragon!" he shouted, and extended a menacing alliance of finger and thumb, but Joan put him by.

"Gently," she pleaded—"gently. Friends, the Dauphin is honest, but he is hard beset. To-day his broad lands swarm with strangers. But give him only a few to-morrows and he will sweep the strangers into the sea, beat Burgundy to his burrow, and pay his debts like an honest gentleman."

The provisioner shook his head. He saw that he was to be treated civilly, that the soldier would not be allowed to bully him, and he took advantage of the situation.

"Fine words," he ejaculated, dubiously. The boot-maker, hiding behind his companions, with an eye to Lahire's fingers, supplemented his friend's phrase.

"Butter no parsnips!" he squeaked, and then dodged in fear that Lahire's hand might be seeking him. But Lahire kept quiet, and the girl spoke again.

"In a fortnight the siege of Orleans will be raised and the English in retreat. Will you not give your King credit till then?"

There was wisdom in her speech, magic in her voice. The malcontents whispered together. Joan's calm, frank manner had at once staggered and softened them, and they were inclined to make terms with the

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girl of whom they had heard so much. After brief consultation, they spoke.

"We will give the King a fortnight's credit," the provisioner said, slowly, and his fellows nodded their heads in unison.

Joan smiled approval and clapped her hands.

"That's loyal talking." She turned to Lahire eagerly. "You have money for the King?"

Lahire made a wry face. The coins he had lifted were meant for the King's pleasures, not for the King's debts.

"He would not thank me to use it thus," he murmured.

But Joan was imperiously indifferent to all protests or remonstrances. The King's creditors had been gentle with the King. She would be gentle with the King's creditors. She held out her hand imperatively. Very reluctantly Lahire extracted from his pouch a plump bag of money, which he slipped onto Joan's insistent palm. She grasped it and turned to the gaping crowd about her. Plunging her hand into the sack, she pulled out a handful of bright pieces. "Come," she said, pointing to the table. "Yonder is paper, yonder is ink, yonder are pens. Make me out, good sirs, fair receipts for money on account, so much for every man and woman of you all that be the King's creditors."

The next few minutes were busy minutes about the table. Joan could not read or write, but she could understand human faces, and, as Lahire had the breed-

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ing of a clerk, there was no room, had there been inclination, for cheating. Receipts were made out and signed, money changed hands, and in a twinkling all that turbulent, discontented crowd was transformed into a mob of enthusiasts, for the Maid first, then for Lahire, because, after all, he provided the gold, then for the King. She paid for the boots, too, which Lahire declined to surrender, and which he now concealed in a corner of the fireless hearth. When the grumblers, grumbling no longer, had trailed out and the hall was again void, Lahire turned to Joan with a cry of approval.

“You are a wonderful pleader.”

Joan made a merry little face at him.

“It is fit that the prince be honest, for he is the pattern of France.”

“I think you will prove the pattern of France,” Lahire asserted. “But you may fail.”

Joan spoke with conviction.

“I shall not fail to raise the siege of Orleans and crown the Dauphin at Rheims.”

Lahire mused for a moment, pondering possibilities. Then he said, slowly:

“Well, if you fail you shall share my fortunes as long as Lahire has a coin in his wallet.”

Joan looked at him with a grateful sadness, for she knew his worth and dimly divined their common sorrow.

“You are a friend to your friend. But I shall not fail.”

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The pair were silent for a space. Then Joan questioned, remembering.

"Have you sent to Fierbois for the sword my voices spoke of?"

"Surely," said Lahire, "I sent two priests thither, bidding them bring the sword here if they found it."

Joan showed that she could frown as well as smile as she knitted her brows.

"If they found it! When they found it."

Lahire was lavishly apologetic of gesture.

"Of course, of course, I meant that," he protested, and then, to help him, Chartier entered the room, and Lahire questioned him quickly.

"Have you found us a hermitage?"

"Yes," said the poet. "Come with me, Maid. You shall bide in the room of a maid-of-honor that is abroad, till it is time to find you."

Joan looked at Lahire wistfully.

"Do not keep me long," she entreated.

Lahire beamed upon her.

"Be of cheer," he encouraged her, and on that encouragement she quitted the hall with Chartier. But Lahire was full of doubts and fears for her, and most of all he kept saying to himself: "I hope they will find that sword she talks of."

XI

HOW JOAN'S WORDS CAME TRUE

LAHIRE'S meditations were interrupted by the coming of one in tawdry parti-color, who slunk into the room, and, seeing him, crept timidly to his side. Lahire stared at the mountebank.

"What do you want, motley?"

The poor buffoon looked at Lahire with the grin of an idiot, and touched Lahire's armor with a hesitating finger.

"Sleep, dreams," he said, drearily. Then he added, "You are a soldier?"

"Indifferently," Lahire answered, good-naturedly.

Then the mummer drew a dagger from the breast of his fantastic jerkin and offered it diffidently to Lahire.

"I bought this just now at Simon the armorer's. Is it good steel?"

Lahire took the weapon and eyed it critically. The dagger was long and strong and sharp, of simple make but keen temper.

"All Simon's work is fine. I could drive this through a coat of steel." He gave back the dagger to the mummer, who clutched it eagerly.

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"What do you want it for, motley?"

"To pick my teeth; I am strong enough for that," the mountebank answered, glancing towards the terrace, where now the shadow of Gontran fell across the white stone. "I thank your valor," and he slipped out of the room as stealthily as he had entered it.

Lahire whistled.

"He wears jester's weeds," he thought, "but he keeps his jest to himself."

At that moment the shadow of Gontran on the terrace was followed by Gontran's bodily presence, and the soldier entered the room with his hand extended to Lahire, who took no notice of the action.

"Do not bear a grudge," Gontran said. "I did not know that you patroned the wench."

Lahire eyed him grimly.

"But for her I should have killed you."

The mountebank peeped from behind a curtain, saw the two men in talk, and crept unheeded along the wall of the room to conceal himself behind the abutment of the great fireplace on the side nearest to the sunlit terrace. Gontran spoke moodily, though he tried to make a jest of it.

"She says I am marked for death, but I never felt so well."

"Were I in your shoes, I should say my prayers," Lahire snapped, sententiously.

Gontran forced a laugh.

"If you are turned monk, I am of no such humor, Saint Lahire."

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So laughing, he turned to go to the terrace. As he did so, the mummer leaped from his hiding-place and jabbed the dagger into him. Gontran, taken unawares, flung out his arms with a groan.

"Oh, God!" he cried, and fell like a tree.

The mountebank poised for a moment over him with hideously contorted face of rage and fear.

"In my girl's name!" he screamed.

Lahire had turned at the cry of the victim, and ran forward to seize the assassin; but the mummer sprang nimbly to the terrace, and, resting his hand on the baluster, leaped into the abyss before Lahire was within three yards of him.

"Hullo, there!—help!" Lahire thundered, bending over the fallen man. It did not take him an instant to see that Gontran was dead. A couple of soldiers came running hurriedly in from the terrace, and at the same moment Chartier returned from placing Joan in safety.

"What has happened?" he cried.

"Gontran stabbed by a madman," gasped Lahire. "He leaped the rail."

The soldiers rushed to the railing and looked over. They could see the body of the mountebank lying on the rocks far below.

"Then he is dashed to pieces," said Chartier. He bent over the body.

"Nothing to be done here. He is quite dead."

"Do you remember?" asked Lahire, in an awed voice. "She said he was near his death."

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"I remember," said Chartier, gravely.

Lahire turned to the soldiers.

"Bear the body to the guard-house," he commanded. "I will accompany you and tell what I know of the matter."

The soldiers took up the body and bore it away, Lahire, after promising Chartier to return speedily, going with them. When he was alone, Chartier said to himself, thoughtfully:

"I begin to think I may find some matter for my chronicle."

XII

HOW LAHIRE PERSUADED THE KING

IN a little while the meditations of the poet were broken by the noise of bright laughter and the fall of light feet. As he looked up from his reverie, he noted to his surprise that dusk had come upon him unawares, but the gloom of the great hall was promptly dissipated by the entrance of several serving-men bearing torches. Their coming heralded the presence of the young King, fresh from his pleasures and successes in the tilt-yard, with the youth of his court about him, with his favorite Gilles de Laval close at hand, with the adorable Catherine at his side.

Gilles's plans for his assumed sister had fallen out as he wished. On her appearance at the court her beauty instantly won the heart of the young King; and what her beauty had won, her wit, her wisdom, and her skill in music and the arts was able to hold. Neither his Queen, Marie of Anjou, nor the Queen's mother, Yolande of Aragon, ever made open war upon the King's loves. They knew too well that volatile, uneasy spirit to think to hold, to think to restrain it by the fetters of a formal law, and they knew too well

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the strength of the influence of the Lord Gilles of Laval to resent the presence of his sister or to show suspicion of her power over the King. They had seen such flames rise and die out, and they waited with equanimity for the extinction of the new fire.

Neither the Queen nor the Queen's mother were of the party that had now flooded into the great hall and filled it with light and laughter, bright dresses and fair faces. Neither was La Tremouille, who, under pretence of indisposition, kept her own apartments, giving instructions to Nicholas Loyseleur, Laval's confidential rascal, touching certain messages that were to be carried in the traveller's memory and delivered by word of mouth to the Duke of Burgundy, all to the furtherance of the pleasant determination to keep things as they were. But all that was idle, all that was heedless, all that was high-spirited and bright-eyed at the court of Chinon came at the King's heels into the hall and seemed to sway before the gaze of Alain Chartier like the glowing arras of some fantastic tapestry peopled with gorgeously colored figures and fluttered by a wind of delicate desires.

Charles hailed Chartier with a foolish face of pleasure.

"We rode well," he asserted, and turned for confirmation to Catherine. "Tell him we rode well," he begged.

Beautiful Catherine made him a beautiful reverence.

"Like Achilles, sire, that was taught by the centaur Chiron."

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Charles liked the touch of legendary scholarship.

"I am luckier than Achilles," he averred, "for my Briseis is not taken from me."

He overlooked the lady with amorous eyes, thought himself for the moment a more victorious Achilles, and clean forgot that he was the beggarly lord of a dwindling lordship. If the awkward silence that followed his foolish speech had not reminded him of the fact, at least a poet's protest did its best to do so.

"I would that your Majesty resembled Achilles otherwise," Chartier said, caustically.

Charles turned impatiently from the light of his lady's eyes.

"How so?"

Chartier made a submissive reverence, and answered, neither submissive nor reverential:

"In his victories, sire."

The many-colored court gasped at such plain speaking. Gilles de Laval muttered, "Insolent," and wasted a frown on the indifferent poet.

Chartier, who held his favor with the King, and knew that he held it, by his outspokenness, went on: "As chronicler of my King's reign, I wish my pages were less dismal."

Charles sighed heavily. He remembered, reluctantly, that the English held Paris, that the English were besieging Orleans, were making hay of his monarchy.

"I had forgotten our sorrows and the little left to me that daily grows less."

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Catherine laid a soft hand on his silken sleeve and whispered:

"You are King of France, sire."

Even her voice could not cheer him. He was in the dumps, as such men easily are when forced to the contemplation of some unwelcome, unpalatable fact.

"'King of Chinon,' they call me in mockery," he complained. "When the English take Orleans I shall not be even that, and must fly the land."

Nobody knew quite what to say, therefore nobody said anything except Chartier.

"There is another thing a king can do," he said, dryly.

Gilles, disliking the turn of talk, struck in.

"What is that, philosopher?"

While the King was speaking Lahire had entered the hall unnoticed. He slipped quietly to where he had concealed the royal boots, and, taking them up, hid them behind his back while he listened to the royal talk.

Chartier had his answer pat for Gilles.

"He can die at the head of his army."

The words stirred Charles like a trumpet-call, and he cried, with a brief spasm of enthusiasm:

"As a fighting king should die."

Then his voice fell, and he added, reflecting:

"But I must live for my subjects." In a lower voice he whispered to Catherine, "And for my love."

At this moment Lahire came blithely forward,

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still holding the royal boots concealed behind his back.

"There is no need for your Majesty to die or fly," he shouted. There was a little thrill of surprise among the courtiers at the sudden appearance of the war-worn freebooter. Charles was frankly glad to greet him.

"Lahire, welcome, dear ruffian! What am I to do?"

Lahire made him a bow.

"Send for the Maid of Domremy, sire."

There was a buzz among the lords and ladies. All had heard of the strange girl from Domremy, all longed to see her. So far, public opinion was on the side of Lahire. A witch was worth looking at any day.

Here Gilles interfered, protesting:

"The Maid, the Maid, always the Maid. Who believes in her?"

Lahire parroted him, derisive.

"The Maid, the Maid, always the Maid.' I believe in her."

It seemed as if another moment would have brought Lahire and Gilles to blows in the very presence of the King. Charles saved the situation.

"So you advise me to see this maid?" he asked Lahire.

"Yes, sire," Lahire answered, plumply.

Charles turned to Gilles.

"And you advise me not to see her?" he questioned.

By this time Catherine's agitation would have been obvious to every one, if every one had not been

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busy with the see-saw between Lahire and the Lord of Laval, with the King for balancer.

Gilles gave Catherine a glance that compelled her to restrain her emotions, and answered:

"Yes, sire."

Charles turned and asked, weakly, of Catherine:

"What am I to do?"

Catherine answered as weakly:

"It is not for me to advise your Majesty."

There came a kind of hush over the assembly, which was roughly broken by Lahire.

"Your Majesty seems to me very ill-shod."

Charles glanced down at his slim feet and sighed.

"Alas, Lahire, the rascal boot-maker will not let me have new gear till I pay for the old."

Lahire, like a magician producing mice from a countryman's hat, gravely brought the royal boots from behind his back.

"What are these, sire?" he asked, triumphantly.

Charles hailed them delighted, as a child might hail an unexpected doll.

"My boots—my beautiful boots!"

Lahire dandled them before him, tantalizing, while he cried, derisive of the gaping court:

"But for the Maid you would have had no boots to-day, nor no dinner, neither."

"What had she to do with my boots or my dinner?" Charles asked, amazed, while Catherine hung on Lahire's words, the court tittered, and Gilles frowned at the turn things were taking.

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"Why," explained Lahire, "she so wheedled and coaxed and cajoled your creditors that no stiff-beard of them all could deny her. So your Majesty can wear new boots and eat your dinner and thank the Maid of Domremy."

Charles turned to Gilles with an apologetic smile.

"Perhaps, cousin, we might as well see this girl."

Gilles concealed his ill-humor with an impassive mask.

"As your Majesty pleases."

Charles addressed his poet chronicler.

"What says Alain Chartier?"

Chartier's answer was emphatic.

"See the girl, sire."

Charles, eager for further support, next appealed to the fair woman who stood near him.

"What says Lady Catherine?"

Catherine knew that Gilles de Laval was watching her closely, knew that she must speak warily.

"I think, with my brother, that it is as your Majesty pleases."

Charles renewed his attack on Gilles.

"It can do no harm," he hinted.

Gilles prepared to concede in order to gain time.

"Perhaps not," he admitted. "In a week's time—in ten days."

Lahire blew in upon his tactics boisterously.

"Ten yellow devils!" He attacked the King.

"Why not to-day, sire?"

Gilles protested.

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"There would not be time to-day to send for the girl."

Lahire leered at him, maliciously triumphant, as he proclaimed:

"There is no need to send for her. She is here."

Catherine started, and clasped her hands. The courtiers' interest quickened.

"Here?" repeated Charles, in astonishment, while Gilles asked, furiously:

"By what right did you dare—?"

He got no further. Lahire outraved him.

"Use no 'by what rights' and 'did you dares' with me. What Lahire does gives its own rights, and what Lahire dares no man may over-guess!"

Charles placated the raging man-at-arms.

"Gently, my lion, gently. Since the girl is here, bring her to us."

Lahire had gained his point.

"Instantly, sire," he promised, and vanished, delighted, from the hall.

No sooner had Lahire left the hall than Gilles de Laval addressed the King.

"Sire," he said, deferentially, "I think it would be well on such an occasion that her Majesty the Queen and Queen Yolande should be present. May I respectfully suggest that my sister should carry to the royal ladies your Majesty's request for their company."

"A good thought," Charles answered, approving, as if the thought had been his own. He turned to Catherine, who waited anxiously, wondering what

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dark purpose lay behind the simple proposal of the man who was once her master.

"Fairest of women," said Charles, softly, "will you present our homage to my lady and consort and to the Queen Yolande, and entreat their presence here? Tell them that our trusty Lahire has persuaded us to grant an audience to the mad Maid of Domremy."

Catherine paid her royal lover a sweeping reverence and left the hall with her attendant ladies. The moment she was gone Gilles de Laval came close to the King's side.

"Sire," he said, "a test for this wench. Let some one take your place upon the throne while you stand apart among the rest. If the Maid be what she says she is, she will not be deceived. If she be deceived, she is not what she says she is."

"Poor girl!" commiserated Chartier.

"It is hard luck for the lass," Charles said, kindly, "but we will try the trick."

He turned to a young courtier that stood with the others, apart.

"My Lord of Angoulême, take our seat and wear our mantle."

He swung the rich, if somewhat faded, cloak from his shoulders. The young Lord of Angoulême lifted it from the royal hands and, folding it about him, took the monarch's place on the throne. He had scarcely done so when the two queens, mother and daughter, with their ladies of honor, entered the hall, Catherine following respectfully in their wake. Queen

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Marie gave a little start of surprise as she saw the Lord of Angoulême on the throne.

Charles advanced towards her, saying:

“My lady and queen, my Lord of Angoulême is no usurper. We are but playing a game with the maid from Domremy.”

Catherine saw the plot and sighed, “Heaven have pity!”

XIII

HOW JOAN CAME TO HER KING

THE two queens took their places on seats by the side of the royal throne. The court ladies gathered about them, the courtiers formed a glittering group apart, and in the heart of that group Charles hid himself, childishly delighted with the childish trick he was about to play. Charles was twenty-six years of age, had been married for some seven years, and, at least nominally, King of France for about the same space of time, but his mind was still in little more than the nursery stage of intelligence, when the world is no more than a game of play, and its figures, animate and inanimate, so many puppets to play with and to call by what names you please.

By the time that these arrangements were completed, a messenger that had been despatched by the Lord of Laval came scurrying back to say that Lahire and his mad captive, for so they were pleased to regard her, were on the way to the presence. Instantly a hush fell upon the expectant company, and it was in the midst of that stillness that Lahire and Joan entered the great hall.

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By the side of the door at which they entered, Lahire found Gilles de Laval waiting for him. In an instant his quick eyes, ranging over the brilliant assemblage, saw the young Lord of Angoulême simpering and mincing on the royal throne, nowhere saw the King. He saw, indeed, but scarcely noted, one white face staring out of all the crowd of women about the queens, the face of the King's favorite, the Lady Catherine of Laval. Instantly Lahire grasped the trap that had been laid for Joan, and made to warn her, but before he could speak Gilles had plucked him by the sleeve and whispered in his ear:

"The King commands your silence."

In that momentary delay Joan had advanced from the side of Lahire and was already in the middle of the chamber.

"God help her!" groaned Lahire, and could do no more but stand there and wait to see her shamed and scorned and hounded out of the castle.

But Joan moved quietly and slowly across the patterns of the tiled pavement, as composedly as she might have gone across a meadow at Domremy. She saw in front of her a company of the noblest lords and dames of France, their finery lit now by the light of many torches. Colored stuffs and colored jewels glowed in the flaring flames. The fans of ladies fluttered; the armorials of great lords proclaimed themselves on broad breasts; a thousand unfamiliar hues and forms combined to dazzle the eyes and disturb the composure of a peasant and a stranger. But Joan,

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peasant though she was, and stranger though she was, moved over the shining floor, neither shy nor forward, quite undazzled and undisturbed by the glitter of the court. But when she had got within a little way of the man that sat upon the throne and was ready, in all reverence, to salute him, then while Catherine's white face grew whiter and Lâhire's heart drummed in his bosom, to the unspeakable joy of two, the rage of one, and the amazement of all others, she paused and uttered a little cry of surprise. For a moment she looked about her puzzled, as one unable to realize such treason; then, without a moment's hesitation, she made for the cluster of nobles that concealed the grinning Charles, and, pushing the outer lords aside as heedlessly as if they had been so many ninepins, she knelt before the revealed and much-bewildered monarch. A low murmur of amazement ran round the hall, while Joan spoke cheerily, looking up into the man's face.

"God give you good life, gentle Dauphin."

Charles denied her—pretended to be querulous.

"Why do you kneel to me? The King sits yonder."

He pointed to the throne, where the young Lord of Angoulême sat and tried to look regal.

Joan expostulated.

"In God's name, gentle prince, you are the Dauphin and none other. God has sent me to give you succor, and if you lend me soldiers I will raise the siege of Orleans and crown you king at Rheims."

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Charles assumed the King at once, for he knew now that the girl knew him.

"You speak big words, Maid."

Joan rose to her feet and faced him bravely, while the on-lookers stared, too busy to notice how white was Catherine's face or how red Lahire's.

"I shall do big deeds," she said, proudly, "little though I seem, for God has called me, and His saints go at my right hand and at my left."

Charles was gracious, but incredulous.

"How do I know that you are inspired by God and not by Satan?"

Then the gaping court saw a strange sight—Joan plucked the King by the sleeve and drew him apart to a corner of the hall where they could speak unheard. As she did so the Lord of Angoulême somewhat sheepishly left the throne and joined the courtiers.

When the pair were out of earshot, Joan said:

"This morning, gentle Dauphin, you prayed in your oratory, and there was a great pain at your heart."

Charles was amused at such simple speech after such solemn preparation.

"Every morning I pray in my oratory, and there is always a great pain at my heart."

"Gentle Dauphin," Joan asked, "did you tell any one what it was that troubled you as you prayed?"

Charles, remembering the morning and its woe, answered her, shuddering:

"No, no!"

HOW JOAN CAME TO HER KING

Now Joan for the first time spoke to him passionately, as one suddenly inspired.

"Did you not pray that if you were true heir and issue of the house of France, and the kingdom justly came to you, God might be pleased to let you guard and defend it as a king should defend his kingdom; but that if you were not true heir, God would grant you escape from death or prison into the land of Spain or the land of Scots?"

Charles, as he listened, seemed to hear his troubled morning prayer renewed to his astonished ears.

"That was the prayer I prayed," he admitted.

Joan raised her hands to heaven, and the face of the peasant girl glowed with celestial ardor.

"And this is Heaven's answer, given by me, God's herald. You are the true heir of France, the King's son, and a king."

"Does Heaven," the King asked—"Heaven that tells you this—tell you to serve France?"

"Give me an army, sire," Joan said, boldly, "and I will drive the English from Orleans and set the crown of France upon your head."

Charles looked wistfully into the bright, eager, young face, the cheeks flushed with courage, the eyes shining with promise. He felt strange stirrings at the heart; unfamiliar thoughts troubled his brain; for an honorable moment he sickened of his miserable little court, with its miserable little pleasures and its pitiful little sins. For an honorable moment he yearned to be a king indeed, and to do kingly deeds.

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The sound of the Maid's voice thrilled him like the sound of trumpets blown in some high pitch of gallant battle, a rally for God, for honor, for glory. He was the heir of France, descendant of a line of kings; he had no doubt of his blood now. She was a peasant girl, ignorant, simple, her hands hard with toil, her skin tanned by the sun and wind, her clothes coarse and homely, her way of life humble and obscure. Yet in that honorable moment the woman seemed to him the royal creature and himself one mean and unworthy. What had he done that was kinglike since those days when Tanneguy Duchatel snatched him from murderous Paris? Nothing, his conscience answered, with a sudden sternness that shook his spirit like a blow. Well, he would now be rightly regal, he would do as a king should do.

"Maid," he said, "I believe in you, and you shall have your wish."

He turned to where his courtiers stood apart and beckoned, and at that signal they drew near to him, lords and ladies, a brilliant mob of vivid colors, the ruddy torchlight flowing over noble draperies and gorgeous stuffs, cloth of gold, cloth of silver, brocades fantastically patterned, silks dyed with all the mingled crimsons of the sunset, all the shifting azures of the sea, all the mingled tints of the peacock, all the iridescence of the prism. The girl gazed at all that pomp and pride with eyes no wider than when, of a spring morning in Domremy, they greeted the earliest primrose with unconquerable tears. Above that mass

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of wedded hues she saw the array of white faces fixed on her—the beautiful faces of women, the varied faces of men—some smiling, some sneering, all staring with an intensity of gaze that might have troubled an emperor trained to pageantry from his babyhood, but which brought no shadow of embarrassment to the peasant girl.

“Lords,” said Charles, “this maid appears a messenger from Heaven, and she shall lead an army to Orleans.”

A murmur of surprise ran round the company that had been the wondering spectators of the mysterious interview between the King and the peasant girl in the boy’s dress. Lahire, heedless of courtly conventions, thundered his approval.

“Spoken like a king!”

Gilles de Laval, watching the King and the Maid, malevolently muttered:

“Spoken like a fool!”

Catherine, hidden from sight behind the ranks of court ladies, said to her heart, in joy and thankfulness:

“Heaven be praised!”

There came a lull after so much wonder, and in that lull another marvel happened. For while Joan had been speaking with the King there had come one to Alain Chartier and whispered him, and now in the strained silence Chartier approached Charles.

“Sire,” he said, “two priests wait without—two priests that have come from Fierbois. They bear a

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sword which they say they are to deliver to the Maid, whom they hear to be in the castle."

Joan clapped her hands gleefully, and Lahire heaved a sigh of satisfaction.

"The sword—my sword!" she cried—"the sword of Saint Catherine."

Charles gave order that the priests should be at once admitted to his presence. Then he turned to the girl and asked her, "What is this sword?"

"A sword," Joan answered, "that Saint Catherine promised me, a sword that shall scour your enemies out of France."

As she spoke, the two priests that Lahire had sent to Fierbois entered the hall, the elder of them carrying a large, knightly sword that seemed old and rusty, but through the disfiguring stains it could be seen that five crosses of gold were worked into the steel along the length of the blade. Charles, advancing, took the ancient sword from its bearer, and it was with a strange exaltation of spirit that he put the weapon, which came at once as a sign and symbol, into the outstretched hands of Joan.

Joan handled the heavy blade as if she had always been familiar with the use of arms. Upon her face she felt a breath of spring blowing, a woodland wind seemed to fan her flushed cheeks, a wind delicately sweet with the perfume of early flowers, a wind that seemed to blow through the dark places of the court and purge them of their grossness, a wind that was soon transmuted into the murmur of miraculous

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voices. And then Joan said what she seemed commanded to say.

“Sword of the saints, I will shed no blood with your sacred blade, but I will bear you where much blood shall be shed, and wherever I carry you there will be fewer enemies for France.”

Even the languorous women, even the voluptuous men, that heard her were stirred by the sight of that inspired figure lifting the great sword, by the sound of her speech. As for those that were soldiers at heart and brave, they were, in the passion of the moment, hers to a man. Charles, strangely burning with a flame of exaltation, clasped her by the hand and called her comrade.

XIV

HOW JOAN MET WITH DIFFICULTIES

JOAN had gained the King's confidence, a confidence strengthened when he heard the tale of Gontran's death. But her task was not yet over; indeed, it seemed hardly to have begun. Gilles de Laval was discomfited, but not baffled. He roused La Tremouille from his intrigues with Burgundy to consider the serious menace which this madwoman, as he still insisted on calling her, was to the agreeable policy of leaving things as they were. La Tremouille was readily alarmed, and instantly flung all his strength into the scale against the girl from Domremy. He had great influence with the King, who was easily governed by such men as he and the Lord of Laval, who, for his part, was able, or thought he was able, to exercise a greater influence through the aid of the fair lady whom he called his sister. Here, however, he found less success than he had anticipated. Catherine would do nothing to harass his plans, but she would also do nothing that might in any way injure Joan; and Gilles did not venture to urge her too far, lest her temper might turn altogether.

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However, there were enough at the court of those that thought with La Tremouille and the Lord of Laval to delay very considerably the progress of Joan's wishes.

Grave doubts were raised by solemn ecclesiastics as to the certainty of Joan's heavenly inspiration; and, though Charles professed himself to be perfectly content with the sign that Joan had shown him, he could not successfully resist the demand for serious examination of Joan's pretensions and spiritual condition. So there was an inquiry at Poitiers, where a large number of clerics and learned doctors did their best to browbeat and frighten Joan into some admission that would invalidate her claims and destroy the confidence of the King. The attempt was wholly unsuccessful. Joan faced her inquisitors with bold courage and unchangeable composure. No questions they might ask prevailed to snare her into any confession that could be used against her; no inquiries that they might make at Domremy could find anything against her character or against her spiritual state of mind. So, after a while, they had to let her go victorious, and she came back to Chinon and the court and was able to pursue her plans with less opposition.

All this is told in a thousand chronicles, and over all this Dom Gregory passes lightly. He appears to be most interested, or Chartier before him was most interested, in matters concerning the Maid and her friendship with Lahire, which seem either to have escaped the attention of, or perhaps been discredited by, other historians of the time. As, however, it is

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Dom Gregory's chronicle which, by very reason of its novelty, interests us here, we shall adhere to the indications which he gives, and the matter which next attracts him deals with the making of the armor for the Maid.

XV

HOW JOAN WAS GIVEN ARMOR

SIMON the armorer stood in his shop and plied his trade. He was of the third generation of his name in the craft. His grandfather had been a soldier of fortune who had served French dukes with Greek titles in Peloponnesus and Attica, in the days when the classic soil of Hellas was dominated by Frankish adventurers. Simon the first, if we may so style this worthy, had fallen in love with a strange girl he had met in a wood. She, however, had married a son of that unlucky Duke of Athens who went down with his chivalry in the slough of Cephissus's flooded fields, when the Catalan Grand Company ended the French rule in the Morea. Simon the first was faithful to his love to this degree, that while the girl, who had once told him she was immortal, lived, he never married, though, being a soldier of fortune, it is to be feared that he often and lightly loved. That was his idea of fidelity to a grand passion. But when the one-time immortal paid the price of mortality, and when her lover and husband gladly flung away his life in the English wars, Simon had qualms of

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conscience, and made an honest woman of the mother of his sturdy son and namesake. By this time Simon was an armorer by trade, having given up following the wars to make harness for others who still played the great game. Very well and featly he made it, and his fame abides in Rouen city to this day. His son, Simon the second, drifted to Chinon, blown by the winds of a love adventure—for he took after his father in more ways than one. It was his grandson Simon, the fourth of direct descent, who now sang merrily to himself in his busy solitude as he put the last touches to a suit of silver armor—which armor he had made with his own hands and with the tenderest care, and which he now burnished till it glowed like forged moonlight. This was his song:

“Saint George he was a jolly saint,
The English held him dear;
He kept Saint Denis in restraint
And stole from France her cheer.
But now Saint Michael’s chosen one,
The Maid so fair to see,
Will make Saint George’s soldiers run
And set Saint Denis free.”

There was method in the smith’s blithe music. Saint Michael was in those days the most popular saint in the heavenly company in those parts of France which still hailed Charles of Valois as king. Not that the overthrower of Lucifer had in any wise supplanted Saint Denis, patron saint of France, in general regard. But the fair city of Paris was Saint Denis’s chosen

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home, and while the fair city of Paris was in the hands of the English enemy it became a general assumption, if one unauthorized by the Church, that the beheaded saint and martyr was for the time being himself a prisoner to the hated islanders, and that it was necessary to find him a substitute or lieutenant to cheer French spirits while he pined in captivity. Which is why Simon the armorer hymned Saint Michael so blithely and had a little silver image of the militant saint niched in a shrine in the corner. Saint Michael had been doing good turns to France in Normandy and elsewhere, where captains of France had made head against the English and their allies of Burgundy. So Simon loved Saint Michael with all his heart, and was very ready to love the maid from Domremy, who came, it seemed, in Saint Michael's name and for whom he made white armor by the King's commands.

There came a knock at the door. Simon paused in his singing and burnishing and shouted a lusty summons to come in. The door opened and the Lord Gilles of Laval entered the workshop. Simon saluted the great man respectfully, and the great man saluted Simon curtly. He would not have saluted him at all if he had not been the best armorer in the King's dwindling dominions.

"Is my dagger ready?" he asked.

He looked vexed and was vexed; for the Maid had carried all before her since her first success with the King, and very soon a little army was to march under her command to the relief of Orleans. With that

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army went a rabble of grand captains, including Lahire and the King's brother, the Duke of Alençon, and the Lord Gilles of Laval himself. The Lord Gilles was hurt to the quick at the Maid's success. It interfered with his well-arranged plans and the Duke of Burgundy's well-arranged plans. But if the Maid was going to march to Orleans he was glad to march with her. It gave him chances to make mischief.

"This three days," said Simon, answering the lord's question about the dagger, and, going to a side-shelf, he sought and found the weapon asked for. It was a costlier piece of goods than the dagger he had sold some days earlier to a poor rogue of a mountebank, which same dagger had let out the life of Messire Gontran de Noirmont. But it was of no better steel or temper, for with honest Simon there was but one quality of work, and that the best possible.

The dagger of the Lord Gilles of Laval had a handle of curious and charming craftsmanship, that had cost Simon pains and my Lord of Laval bright pieces; for the handle was fashioned into the semblance of the body of a fair woman, but a grinning death's-head crowned the comely image. My Lord of Laval had taken much pleasure in this conception; had fondled and caressed it in fancy before he intrusted its interpretation in metal to Simon. He seemed to find a kind of allegory in the idea that stimulated his senses. Now, as he took the weapon from the hands of Simon, he eyed the work critically, approved it cordially, and then, drawing the blade from its sheath, felt point and edge

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with patent satisfaction, which found its expression in speech.

"Fine point," he approved, as he pressed it against the ball of his thumb—"fine point to rip white flesh into red mouths of pain."

He paused, lingering on the speculation and seeming to find a delight in it. He caressed the keen blade affectionately, then looked from it to Simon, who was gaping at his vagaries.

"How many times," he asked, thoughtfully, with the air of one to whom the answer was a matter of moment—"how many times could you wound man"—he paused an instant in his interrogation, and then added, slowly—"or woman, with this, and still keep the spirit squealing in its house of pain?"

He had forgotten where he was; his warped spirit had floated over plain and hill to a grim castle where strange things had happened, and a grim hall that was a sepulchre. A ghastly satisfaction dwelt on his face.

Simon stared at him in unfeigned disapproval.

"I lack such humors. I fight to kill," he grunted. Gilles sneered.

"Brute butcher, have you no delicate pleasures? What is that?"

He pointed to the white armor which lay before Simon.

"The Maid's armor," Simon answered, shortly.

Gilles mocked at it.

"White for purity. Kings have fair thoughts for fair maids."

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Simon met his mocking heartily.

"God bless the Maid! She puts such heart in us that I sing at work, who used to rust steel with tears."

Gilles was indifferent to his emotion.

"She has bewitched the King," he said, thoughtfully. "How?"

Even then there came a loud noise of shouting outside. Simon raised his head in exultation.

"Here she comes. Hark to them cheering the Maid. They crowd to stare at her fair face and would kiss her hands if she would suffer it."

Gilles looked through the window.

"Lahire with her, as ever," he said, with a sour frown. "I will not meet her now. I will go this way through your stithy."

Simon nodded his head in surly assent, and the Lord of Laval slipped out of the room. When he was out of sight, however, he lingered. The stithy was deserted. The lads, Simon's apprentices, had been given holiday on the completion of the silver armor and had hastened into the streets to swell the crowds that gathered here and there in the little town, to lie in wait for and to greet the coming of the Maid. It was the wish of Gilles to speak with the Maid alone, and her presence in the armorer's shop might afford him the opportunity if he could but get Lahire out of the way. With this object in view, he passed out of the stithy into the quiet of the deserted streets at the back of the house, and, making sure that the door

HOW JOAN WAS GIVEN ARMOR

remained unfastened behind him, made his way unimpeded and unseen to the castle and the King.

In the mean time, the noise and the shouting in the street in front of Simon's shop increased in strength and volume, and Simon, peering through his little window, could see the crowd come flooding over the cobbles like a human sea. Every casement was opened and filled with craning heads and shoulders, whose owners stared down upon the strange scene below them and shouted and huzzaed as lustily as school-boys on a spree. The road was filled with a crowd largely composed of women, whose homely grays and greens, russets and purples formed two warm walls of color for the living lane which a company of pikemen was forcing through the mass. When the soldiers had forced their way with some difficulty to the door of honest Simon's shop, they formed a kind of barrier of levelled pikes at each side to keep the pressing people back. Over this barrier the nearest leaned and reached that they might be so much the closer to the coming Maid, and down the opening thus formed came now in another instant the Maid herself, on foot, with Lahire walking by her side.

She whom we saw last standing unabashed before a blazing court, clad simply in the sombre habit of a poor knight's retainer, now, though she still carried the habit of a man, carried it under very different conditions. The hodden-gray jerkin and hose and plain black cap had changed to splendid vestments of scarlet and white, made from the richest stuffs and

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fashioned with the rarest skill. But though the outward seeming was thus altered, though poverty had given place to pomp, the Maid herself remained unchanged. Her fair young face would have seemed adorable in any guise; her brave young body, slim and supple and alert, needed no parament of silks and jewels to enhance its carriage, and if her simplicity consented to wear splendor, it was because her shrewdness guessed that to do so were best for her mission, as making patent to the people the favor of the King.

As she now appeared in the thronged and heaving street, a deep murmur of admiration, of devotion, stirred the crowd, and many leaned desperately over the restraining pikestaves, seeking to catch and kiss her hands or any part of her garments, and hailing her in broken accents as a blessed messenger of hope. Hopeful, indeed, she looked, and buoyant and happy; her healthy cheeks flushed, and her clear country-child's eyes shone with pleasure as she beheld the reverence and the enthusiasm of the populace. But Lahire, who was not used to have much consideration for the emotions of the humble, and who somewhat resented a demonstration, however affectionate, which delayed the passage of the Maid, was for lessoning them sharply.

"Make a free way for the Maid," he shouted, "gossips, or I break your heads!"

Then Simon could see that the Maid checked the soldier and would have him be gentle with the poor folk. Lahire and Joan were now at Simon's door,

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and as the armorer opened it Joan turned and spoke to the crowd.

"Dear people, you must not kiss my hands nor touch me for luck. I am just one of you. No better, I know; no worse, I hope."

A woman in the crowd cried:

"Pray for us."

Another cried:

"Fight for us."

"Pray you for me," Joan answered, with the color suddenly drained from her face. "Have no fear about the fighting. Pray for me against treachery."

Then she shuddered and moved into the shop. Eager faces were peering in at the window, so Simon drew the curtains. Lahire gave order to guard the door. Joan bade the soldiers be considerate in their dealings with the crowd. Then Lahire closed the door and shut out crowd and soldiers alike.

"Who should be treacherous to you, Maid?" he said, anxiously.

Joan answered, wistfully:

"I do not know, but I fear I shall be betrayed."

"God pity your traitor," Lahire muttered, "if I get him in my grip!"

He was about to bid Simon produce the Maid's armor, hoping to distract her sad thoughts, that had so suddenly dashed her gladness, when he was stayed by a tumult outside, and the sound of a young voice that was heard shouting for admittance, which the soldiers denied.

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"Sirs," Lahire heard the voice call, "I am the Maid's brother. Let me pass." Then the voice swelled louder, calling: "Joan, Joan, are you there?"

Joan gave a cry of delight, and her passing sadness vanished. "It is Pierre," she said, and rushed to the door and opened it. In front of the crowd she saw Pierre and Gérardin d'Épinal endeavoring to persuade the soldiers to grant them admission. The appearance of the Maid changed the situation.

"Let them pass," Lahire commanded.

Instantly the soldiers lowered their pikes, and, while the crowd howled for joy, Pierre and Gérardin rushed into the room and Lahire closed the door behind them.

Joan clasped Pierre very joyfully in her arms.

"Pierre! Dear God, I thank Thee," she sighed from a full heart. She turned to Gérardin and took his hand.

"Gérardin, old friend, when did you come?"

"This morning," Pierre answered. "When you went we followed hotfoot, and got here after long tramping. We learned in the town you were here, and trudged in our dust to find you. If you go fighting, we go fighting, too."

Joan turned to Gérardin with a playful air of surprise.

"Are you going to fight for France, Burgundian?"

Gérardin blushed, but he answered her with steady eyes and with steady lips.

"I am going to fight for you. Your cause must be the true cause."

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Then he was nearly felled to the earth, but it was by no hostile stroke. It was merely Lahire approving his sentiment by patting him on the back. When he had caught his breath again and straightened himself out, and had a little recovered from his confusion on learning that it was Lahire himself, the great Lahire, who had so honored him, Joan took advantage of the calm to ask Pierre some questions that came from her heart.

"How is Domremy? Does my dog miss me? What of Hauviette and Mengette?"

"Domremy is topsy-turvy with wonder," Pierre replied. "The dog whined and pined, but little Jacques is kind to it. The girls cried themselves red-eyed."

Joan smiled fondly.

"The dears! And my mother?"

"Sends blessings, love, and prayers," Pierre assured her.

There was a little pause, and then Joan faltered, timidly:

"My father?"

Pierre spoke sadly.

"Sour and stern. Never speaks your name or lets others speak it."

Joan gave a sigh.

"Thy will be done!"

Here Lahire thought it high time to interfere.

"Come, Maid," he insisted; "no homesickness. Toss Domremy to the moon. We are in Chinon to

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fight for the King, not to sigh over domestic squabbles."

Joan swallowed her sorrow.

"You are right, comrade," she said; and, turning to Simon, "Is my armor ready, friend?" she questioned.

Simon pointed to it.

"Done to last joint, rivet, strap, buckle, nail, link, pin, bolt."

"God strengthen it!" Gérardin prayed beneath his breath.

Joan advanced to the table to look at what it bore, and clapped her hands in delight.

"Oh! oh! the beautiful armor!" she cried. "Is it really for me?"

"Truly is it, Maid," said Simon, "and the best these fingers ever forged, though I never wrought armor for maid before. Now there is much difference between your man and your maid. Your man is flat where your maid is round—"

Lahire interrupted him by clapping a hand on his mouth.

"True, friend, and needless to repeat. Don it at once, Maid. Lahire will be your squire. Here be your hauberk, your cuishes, your greaves, your arm-guards, your gauntlets, your basinet."

As Lahire offered her each of the pieces that made up her martial portion, he and Simon aided her to adjust it to her body, she helping them with a childish and touching delight in her armament, while Pierre and Gérardin stared open-mouthed to see sister and

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playmate cover the white and scarlet splendor of her courtly suit with the plates of mail. When at length the business was completed and Joan stood before them like a burnished image, Lahire thundered approval.

"Bones of Beelzebub, you look like a baby saint."

He held a shield to her as a mirror in which she could see her reflection. She gave a little cry of satisfaction, then put her hands to her face for a moment.

"I should laugh at myself," she confessed, shyly, "or cry for myself, if I did not know that I was doing what I have to do."

Gérardin would have gladly fallen on his knees and worshipped her. Pierre was wildly proud of his sister. Lahire was practical even in admiration.

"Now we must choose you a sword," he said, and turned to inspect Master Simon's stock. But Joan stopped him.

"Nay," she said. "I will have no sword but Saint Catherine's."

She turned to her brother.

"Pierre, will you go to my lodging and bring me my sword?"

Pierre would have gone to the end of the world at the bidding of this wonder, who was still his sister Joan, but he was at a loss.

"Where is the place, Joan? We are strange here."

Lahire met the difficulty.

"Show them the way, good Simon, and bring back a pitcher of wine. I have a king's thirst."

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He thrust some money into Simon's fist, and Simon, who might have boggled at taking money from the King, was proud to do so from Lahire.

"Ay, ay," he responded. "Come, sirs."

And the two youths, walking dazed, like men who still dreamed, followed him out of the shop and into the street, where the people still lingered in the hope to see Joan again.

"Unarm me," said Joan, when she and Lahire were alone. Instantly Lahire began unbuckling and unstrapping, till once again the armor lay, a pile of shining metal, on the armorer's table, and Joan showed bravely again in her coat and hose of white and scarlet.

XVI

HOW JOAN READ LAHIRE A LESSON

“BY the jaws of Saint Juniper,” Lahire crowed, “you make a brave girl-at-arms!”

Joan seated herself on the armorer’s table and addressed Lahire sedately.

“Listen to me, Lahire. The King has given me the army of France, and I mean to make it the army of God. I will have no swearing of oaths in my army.”

“What a delightful idea!” Lahire approved, laughing. He conjured up and was diverted by a picture of an oathless army. But his mirth was not shared by Joan. Though she swung her legs and smiled, it was a judicial smile and not without menace.

“I am serious, comrade. I mean what I say and I will have it so.”

Lahire was still much diverted with his mental picture of a gang of rascallions who might not blaspheme.

“But Joan, dear Maid, consider. Who ever heard of soldiers without oaths?”

The argument did not disconcert Joan.

“They shall hear of it now,” she said, imperatively, “and I rely on your help in this order.”

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Lahire looked puzzled.

"How can I have the face to bid the soldiers keep from swearing who cannot myself speak straight sentence without oath to bolster it?"

Joan answered with an artful air of innocent agreement.

"That is where you are going to help me. You must not swear yourself."

Lahire simply glared at her, and tapped his breast to assure himself of his identity.

"I must not swear myself!"

Joan leaned forward from her table, beaming confirmation.

"You must not swear—not at all."

Lahire, who had been playing with one of Simon's weapons, let it fall with a clang.

"You are drolling, Maid."

He said this, and thought this. Joan dispelled his illusion gravely and sternly.

"You must not swear, Lahire, if you ride with me."

This was becoming serious.

"I would do all for you," Lahire asserted, plaintively, "that man may do, but my oaths are the fuel that keeps the pot of my valor boiling, and I cannot forego them."

As far as it was possible for straightforward Joan to take on an enticing air she took it on then.

"Not to please me?" she said. And then, as if repenting an unfamiliar forwardness, questioned with feminine fierceness:

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"What pleasure or profit to fill your mouth with foul words?"

Lahire pleaded for his beloved blasphemies.

"Consider the trick of a lifetime. I must swear or burst."

Joan groaned over him, and swayed on her table as one in pain.

"Is the sin so hot in you? Then this much grace. You may swear, if you must swear, by your sword."

Lahire, staggered by this proposition, weighed it dubiously.

"By my sword!" He echoed her phrase meanly, and it sounded mean to him. "No more than that? Seems a comfortless kind of oath after all my merry hells and devils."

"Not at all," Joan said, gayly. "It depends on how you say it."

As she spoke she leaped off the table, and, to his surprise, began mimicking different intonations and actions with a native humor and felicity which astonished and amused him:

"As in anger, thus: 'Now, by my sword, villain!'"

She clapped her hand to where her sword should hang and swaggered towards him with a fine assumption of authority.

"Or briskly, thus: 'By my sword, sweet ladies!'"

She was pert and dapper in an instant, wafting kisses from finger-tips as she had seen the court gallants do, and mincing in her gait.

"Or humbly, thus: 'Yea, by my sword, sire!'"

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She spoke modestly, saluting him with a solemn dignity, as practised courtiers salute their King.

Lahire scratched his ear, dazzled and baffled.

“There is something in it, as you put the case. I will try to please you. But you must be patient if the old Adam prevail and I rap out some ancient ribaldry.”

Joan warned him:

“You shall not find me overpatient when I have given an order.”

Lahire, entering into the spirit of the game and recognizing authority, saluted with an assumed alarm:

“Oh, oh! Your pardon, general, I like your spirit. By all the red devils—” he coughed and remembered the new formula—“By my sword, I do.”

Joan applauded.

“Well mended, comrade. Next, each soldier must hear the mass each morning.”

This time Lahire was fairly flabbergasted. The idea was too much for him, even as a joke.

“The jolly, godless ruffians will never do that.”

But Joan was not joking.

“They will do as I bid them—and you will set them an example.”

Lahire’s gorge rose.

“What! I hear mass every morning? Ah, once for all, no, no, no!”

His negatives rose as he protested, till at the end he bellowed like a bull. Joan went on as if she had heard no noise.

HOW JOAN READ LAHIRE A LESSON

"It will be the first order of the day. Any soldier who disobeys it, from the highest to the lowest, will be guilty of disobedience in the face of the enemy, and will be punished, great or small."

Lahire became perfectly grave, and, coming close to Joan, looked into her quiet eyes.

"What is it that makes me stand before you like a school-boy and accept orders that sound like the babble of a natural?"

Joan's answer was pat and apt.

"It is the will of God."

Having got so much, she proceeded to gain more.

"Further: no women may follow the camp."

Lahire felt that nothing could surprise him now. He surrendered at discretion.

"Say no more. If you tell me that every soldier shall string daisies as he marches, I shall not oppose you. But Heaven knows how it will end."

Joan spoke confidently:

"Heaven does know—in the defeat of the enemy."

As she spoke, her fair face flushed with hope.

Just then Chartier entered from the street and beckoned to Lahire.

"Messire Lahire," he said, "the King calls you. He has some message for the Maid through you."

Lahire was gazing at Joan in a rapture of admiration.

"Does she not make a brave figure?" he asked.

"Brave?" replied Chartier. "You should have seen her before the council of inquiry at Poitiers."

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Joan was now red with the embarrassment that praise always brought to her face.

"Is it strange that a girl can speak her mind?" she said, protestingly.

"I think it is," said Chartier, "when she speaks it so well." He turned to Lahire. "She stood before all those grim clerics and routed them with her simple wit. The old bishop tried to trap her thus, asking her cunningly:

"If God wishes to save France, what need has He of soldiers?"

Lahire looked at the girl.

"What did you say to that?"

The past time, the past place, came back to Joan, and she spoke now as she had spoken then:

"The soldiers will fight; God will give the victory."

Chartier was smiling over another memory.

"Then, when brother Seguin of Limoges plagued her, she turned tables on him."

"How so?" Lahire asked, to whom the business at Poitiers was new.

Joan was laughing now as she remembered the episode.

"Oh, nothing. He questioned me, very silly, in a thick, Limousin brogue; so when he asked what language my voices spoke, I told him, 'Better than his.'"

"You can guess how all stared," said Chartier. "But some smiled and seemed glad that the Maid had the best of it."

Joan hung her head penitently.

HOW JOAN READ LAHIRE A LESSON

"I was wrong to fret," she confessed, "but they vexed me wasting the little time God has given me for France. And you waste it now and keep the King waiting."

"One for me," said Lahire.

"Come," said Alain. "You will wait here, Maid?"

"I will," said Joan.

When she was alone she knelt before the image of Saint Michael.

"Blessed Saint Michael," she prayed, "grant wisdom to me simple, strength to me feeble, patience to me impatient. Make me worthy to be thy soldier and the soldier of my King."

As she knelt there quietly, praying by her silver armor, that gleamed in the dim light, she suddenly felt chilled as by the nearing of some evil presence. Gilles de Laval had entered by the door of the stithy. He had prompted Alain's message that he might find the girl alone.

"Maid," he said, and at the sound of his voice Joan made an end of praying, and, rising, confronted the intruder.

"What do you want with me?" she asked. Since she had come to Chinon she had seen little of the Lord of Laval, who on his part had avoided her and had striven in vain to oppose her influence covertly. Joan knew him to be her enemy, and evil, as she had known him to be evil and God's enemy on the day when she had seen him in the oak wood at Domremy.

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"Your friendship," Gilles said, and was silent.

Joan answered him, coldly:

"While you serve the Dauphin we are fellow-soldiers. Let that be enough."

Gilles spoke impatiently.

"It is not enough. Listen to me now, for I have sought this quiet meeting. Years ago I got a book from a soldier that was prisoner in Angers for heresy. He gave it me in change for his life. It treated of alchemy and the raising of devils, and I have studied it deeply, and studied it in vain."

Joan blessed herself.

"What has your sin to do with me?"

"Why," said Gilles, eagerly, hot on his purpose, "the devil grants you powers he denies to me. What I have failed to do it is plain that you can do. Why do you waste his gifts on a foolish King and a ruined country, when we might gain wealth, empire, endless youth—"

Joan shrank from him in pity and loathing.

"If you serve the Prince as vilely as you serve God, the Prince is ill-friended."

Gilles raged at the folly of a girl who had a witch's powers and disclaimed witchcraft.

"I serve the devil and myself. I want to win the world. You can help me. Will you help me?"

Joan spoke sadly, for she was truly grieved to see a valiant gentleman so marred.

"I would help you to win heaven if any prayers could do that."

HOW JOAN READ LAHIRE A LESSON

Gilles was in despair at her not understandable obstinacy.

"Why do you deny me?" he asked, savagely.

Joan felt a familiar chill creeping over her.

"You seem to wade in blood," she moaned. She suddenly stood rigid, as if in a trance, and her words fell from her monotonously like the words of an oracle.

"I see a gray castle in gray hills. I see a room whose rafters echo with women's groans. I see a pit filled with the bones of children—"

Gilles's jaw fell, and he stared at the seer, terrified.

"What do you know?" he gasped; for as she spoke he saw in his mind his evil house in Brittany, with its secret of evil deeds. Even as she spoke, Joan passed out of her state of trance and looked fixedly at him. Already she had forgotten what she seemed to see, but she had not forgotten her mistrust.

"I know that black and white are not more opposite than you and I. I serve God and the King. Trouble me no more."

Gilles looked irresolutely at the disdainful Maid. He envied her the powers which he believed her to possess and the command of which he hoped to persuade her to share with him.

"I am your friend, nevertheless—" he began; but Joan stayed him peremptorily.

"You are God's enemy," she repeated. As she spoke, the street again was noisy with shouts and

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cries of joy, and Gilles knew that others were coming to the armorer's shop. Without a word he turned and left the house by way of the stithy.

Joan was not long left alone. In a few minutes Lahire entered the shop, accompanied by Chartier and followed by Pierre and Gérardin, with Simon bearing a mighty jug of wine. Again and again in the street the people cheered them as they passed into the house. Lahire carried over his shoulder a furled banner, and this he now, kneeling, laid at the feet of the Maid.

"Maid of maids," he said, "the King sends you this banner."

Joan took the banner by its staff and shook the folds free. The flag was made of white linen, fringed with rich silk and powdered with golden lilies. On the field was painted the figure of the Saviour holding a globe in his hand, while on each side an angel knelt in worship. The words "Jhesus Maria" were written underneath.

Years ago her father and mother had given her a ring which had been found somewhere in their fields, a thick, simple ring of solid gold, which was carved with three crosses and the words "Jhesus Maria." No one knew anything about the ring. It might have belonged to some crusading knight whose descendant had lost it in some trivial frontier scuffle. All that the sire of Arc, all that the dame of Arc knew or cared about the matter was that they had found a ring with a devout inscription, which it seemed to

HOW JOAN READ LAHIRE A LESSON

them best to give as a gift to their dear and devout daughter. So they did, and always Joan had loved the ring, with its words of abiding faith.

This was the device that Joan's voices had told her she must carry on her standard. Her wish, by the King's order, had been carried out by a cunning craftsman, and the completed work was in her hands.

"Oh, the fair banner!" Joan cried, in ecstasy, as she scanned the richly wrought imagery. "I love my sword well, but I shall love my banner better, and I shall carry it with my own hand wheresoever I ride."

Lahire objected to this, and so did Chartier—Chartier, on the ground that she would find it too heavy a burden; Lahire, on the ground that she would find it interfere with the use of her sword. To Chartier Joan responded lightly that he did not guess the strength of a country girl's arm; but to Lahire she said, somewhat diffidently, as if she feared he might laugh at her:

"Good friend, I love my sword dearly, but I do not wish to use it, and I have it in my mind that I would kill no man."

Lahire did not laugh; and Joan again turned to the contemplation of her banner.

"It is very beautiful," she said. "See our dear Lord and the attendant angels, just as my voices willed. Now all is ready. In God's name, let us be getting to Orleans."

XVII

HOW JOAN MARCHED TO ORLEANS

MANY famous armies have gathered together since the world took up the trade of war. One thinks of such illustrious assemblages of men as Xerxes called together for the destruction of Athens, or as Darius levied to restrain the march of Alexander, but nothing connected with these two vast armaments has anything like the interest which belongs to the little handful of human beings who marched from Blois on an April morning to attempt the relief of Orleans.

The whole of the forces under Joan's command amounted only to seven thousand men, but they made a brave show in the morning sunlight, and their hearts were full of cheer, because they all believed in their leader and her mission. At the head of the army marched a long procession of white-robed monks, bearing crosses and swinging censers and chanting the "Veni Creator." Following these came Joan herself on a huge white horse, which the King had given to her, her white armor covered by a white surcoat sown with golden lilies, her head uncovered to the morning air. Immediately in front of her her standard was carried,

HOW JOAN MARCHED TO ORLEANS

fluttering its folds and revealing now the image of the Saviour and now the words "Jhesus Maria." Joan's eyes were fixed alternatively upon the hallowed standard and upon the beloved ring she carried on her finger, engraved with the same words that were painted on the banner.

By Joan's side Lahire rode on his black horse, marvelling to find himself in an army which was led by priests; yet, as he listened to the singing of the sacred hymn, and as the faint perfume of the incense tickled his nostrils, he found himself unexpectedly touched by memories, long asleep, of his boyhood, marked for the priesthood, and as the sonorous Latin words came floating to his ears they rekindled in him some friendly thoughts for humanities long disused, if not altogether forgotten.

Behind Joan and Lahire stretched the main part of the army, resolute, well-armed men, with an unwonted expression of reverence on their rugged faces; for the very revolution that had been so sternly effected in their habits had impressed them with a sense of the sanctity of their new general. Then came the long train of carts and cattle to which the army formed an escort, and from which the sounds of bleating sheep and lowing oxen added a strange, bucolic strain to the noise of trampling feet, the clank of armor, the flapping of flags, the clatter of accoutrements, the neighing of horses, the jingling of bits, the groaning of grain-wagons, and the deep intoning of the priests.

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One sound was absent from that curious harmony, as one sight was absent from that long procession which, under other circumstances, would have formed portion and parcel of its being. There was no sound of oaths, loud and deep, in the ranks that day. Joan had forbidden it, and she was able to make herself obeyed, the more easily when it was known that Lahire himself, envied by every swashbuckler in France for the richness and fluency of his profanity, had actually consented to use no bigger oath than to swear by his sword. The more strange peculiarity, however, of that morning's march was that no women went with the army.

The day was an ideal one for the beginning of an enterprise. The golden sunlight of late April flooded the fields of that level, fertile land; the low vines were leafy; the hedges were bright with hawthorn, lilac, and wild roses; while violets, daisies, lilies, and other early flowers sowed the meadows so gayly as to recall to Joan something of the vivid painting of the Valley of Flowers itself.

Joan spoke little as she rode. She was for the most part absorbed in prayer, and the actual direction of the course of the little company lay with others, as she was ignorant of the country and did not know the road to Orleans. Lahire, by her side, watched her and wondered. In every day that passed since he first met the peasant girl at the foot of the Fairies' Tree he had learned not merely to like her more, but to respect more her strange strength of character and

HOW JOAN MARCHED TO ORLEANS

to wonder at the earnestness and single-mindedness with which she followed her purpose.

There was nothing about her of the professional mystic, such as drifted hither and thither in France in those days and mouthed prophetically. She spoke of her voices as simply and unaffectedly as she might have spoken of her friends, and, while she persistently claimed direct personal communication with the saints, she never assumed any superiority to others because of that mysterious intimacy. The saints had been pleased to choose her for their service, for this she was deeply grateful and deeply awed, but she accepted the service as she would have accepted her mother's call to the spinning-wheel or to the fields, with no more sense of personal merit for obedience in the one case than in the other.

Apart from her mission, in which she so devoutly believed and in which she had persuaded so many others to believe devoutly, Joan was a simple, bright, clean-hearted peasant girl, ignorant of many things that were, after all, of little importance, skilled in the simple arts of rustic life, and, above all, inspired by one of the blithest and purest spirits ever given to woman.

What she thought of as she rode we can but, in all reverence, guess. Her spirit doubtless swam in the ether of dreams; for her the April air was alive with voices, for her the delicate April sky was peopled with celestial images. The white clouds that wheeled across the blue were companies of militant angels

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marshalling her little mortal army to victory; the soft, spring-scented wind that fluttered the flowers was but the echo of a finer music than that chanted by the monks; the sunlight, gleaming on the level fields, shone with the glory of God's oriflamme triumphantly unfurled for battle.

It is one of the wonders of astronomy that if we imagine some spectator, placed on a post of observation in one of the more distant stars, and gifted with such sight or aid of marvellous instruments as to enable him to see things passing on our planet, that spectator would, in obedience to the laws of light, see, not what was actually happening on the earth at the moment, but what had been happening many years before when the rays of light which reached him began to flow. He who could be placed in such a position and enabled so to manipulate the marvellous instrument already imagined that he could choose to observe whatever scene he pleased from the earth's story, he might well be at a loss what scene to choose, if by some fantastic chance one glimpse and one alone were permitted him.

But surely, if the choice were more varied, one would seek eagerly for the privilege of seeing so vividly and really some of the scenes from the Maid's life, and among them one of the earliest and most thrilling, the Maid's entry into the leaguered town of Orleans. One thinks of the narrow streets thronged on that April evening with shouting citizens, the great torches flaming and flaring in the air, the trampling of the war-

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horses, the gleam of red light upon armor and the fierce visages of famous captains, the white standard floating over the sea of pale faces that greeted the Maid, herself very pale in her gravity as she gave back to her welcomers words of cheer. The town was wild with joy. It was not yet relieved, indeed, but its citizens were so enraptured by the appearance of this unexpected succor and by the presence of the girl from Domremy of whom they had heard so much that they were already as light-hearted and enthusiastic as if the last of the English bastiles—Paris, say, or Rouen or London—had fallen and the last of the English soldiers had marched away.

Joan had displeasures as well as pleasures attendant upon her arrival in Orleans. She had been led against her knowledge to the wrong bank of the river to avoid the English, and when she learned of the deceit that had been practised upon her she chided Dunois, the Bastard of Orleans, who came forth from the city to greet her, with some justifiable bitterness, telling him that the counsel of God was wiser and safer than his. But Dom Gregory glosses these difficulties. They are out of his picture, and he puts them lightly by. It is the big achievements that please him, and he gives the little difficulties the go-by with a shrug.

Dom Gregory, furthermore, in his account of the Maid's wars with the English around Orleans, seems to be a little confused. He has a tendency to drift into the epical rather than to condescend to the coldly historical. He seems to like to mass together events

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that were, as a matter of fact, separated, some widely, some narrowly, by time, and to group together figures under conditions which either cannot be proved to have existed or can be proved not to have existed at that time. For him, apparently, the processes of war which resulted in the relief of Orleans, rapid though they were, were not rapid enough; and he appears to consider that if a chronicler describes well the taking of one tower, it is as good as describing the taking of a dozen, and saves reiteration. We, as we are interested in his method, will let him have his way, declining all responsibility for his whimsies or desire to set him right.

XVIII

HOW JOAN SENT A HERALD

IN the English camp outside Orleans a little group of soldiers was seated in the shadow of one of the great bastiles, gambling and chatting, and now and then looking with indifferent eyes on the river Loire and the town of Orleans beyond.

"So the fool French have got a girl to help them," said one of them in a pause in the game.

"Truly they have, Peter," said another; "they are ringing bells and blowing trumpets as if it were judgment-day. You can hear them when the wind shifts."

"Say, John, is the girl one of Charlie's darlings?" asked a third, whom his comrade called Harry. John looked knowing.

"They say she's a witch, and Lahire's leman."

"She is a witch for sure," Harry agreed. "Do you know what she has done with her army?"

"What?" asked he they called Peter.

"It is unbelievable," Harry affirmed, "but it comes through a French prisoner who swears it is true. Her soldiers hear mass daily."

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"You jest!" cried John.

Peter gave him the nay.

"No, no. And there's worse. No women follow the camp."

John heaved a sigh.

"I am glad I am not in her army, curse her."

"If you were you might not speak so," Harry asserted. "No man may swear in her army. Even Lahire, whose blasphemies were envied in hell, swears now by no more than his sword."

"There must be magic in the slut if tall men are thus wax in her handling."

"The jade is fair," Peter suggested, "and lavish of favors."

Harry disagreed.

"Soldiers don't keep mass for such every-day fortunes. No, no, by and large the woman's a witch."

"She must be," John decided, "if she can make Lahire talk miminy."

"And Lahire is the only devilskin on their side," Peter commented, sententiously.

Harry swaggered.

"The worst man's no great matter—flesh and blood like the rest. But if this girl be a witch, 'tis an ill business."

John hugged himself.

"No witch can hurt me. I carry a relic I bought of a mendicant."

Peter leaned forward eagerly

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"I will play you for that relic," he cried.

Before the offer could be accepted or refused, Harry struck in hurriedly with:

"Attention, generals!" and the men scrambled to their feet and saluted as three knights came upon them round the angle of the bastille, walking slowly and deep in converse. The soldiers knew them at once for the Lord Suffolk, his brother Reginald Pole, and the redoubtable Talbot.

Talbot pointed at the city and spoke angrily:

"Hear the joy-bells of Orleans because this mad maid has brought their fodder to the donkeys."

Suffolk growled:

"If vixen and victuals give them courage to take the open, we shall soon make an end of them."

"No such luck," Pole complained. "Heroes behind walls they are, hares in the field."

Talbot stretched his great arms.

"There is no pleasure in the world like killing Frenchmen."

"Or kissing Frenchwomen," Pole amended, with a sly lasciviousness.

"Oh, give me English roses," Suffolk said, sharply. He was thinking of many fair faces that graced his loved island, when his thoughts were interrupted by the shrill challenge of a trumpet. The English knights knew well the meaning of that signal.

"A parley, by the Lord!" cried Talbot.

"What can those donkeys have to bray?" Suffolk asked, sourly.

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"Something pleasant, I guess," said Pole, "for here comes Sir John Fastolf as merry as if he were new drunk."

As he spoke the company was truly enlarged by the coming of Sir John Fastolf, a bulky plethoric gentleman, red-faced and rolling of gait, who approached them, laughing loud.

"A jest! a jest!" he bellowed. "By the God your grace is pleased to worship, the best jest since King Harry died."

He so choked with laughter that he could say no more, but stood and rocked before them.

"God's patience, man!" cried Suffolk. "Stop grinning! Your news, Sir John?"

"Ripe news, rich news, rare news. Here comes from Orleans a smock-faced fellow who calls himself a herald from the snipgill in armor, Dolly, prophetess from Domremy."

He so stamped and capered as he spoke that Pole exclaimed:

"He dances like the Neville bear."

"He shall have a staff, too, on his crest," threatened Talbot, "if he does not stop grinning."

Fastolf snarled at him.

"Keep your iron hand for the French, bully Talbot. If you claw me, I claw you, I promise."

Talbot shrugged his big shoulders.

Suffolk interposed:

"Have you seen this maid?"

"Truly have I," said Fastolf. "I saw her ride out

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of the city just now and look about her. She looks like some kissable Greek in her silver pieces."

A few minutes later Joan's messenger was brought before the English lords. Joan had chosen Gérardin d'Épinal to be her envoy, by reason of his having birth and by reason of his being something of a scholar, and, though the youth was strange to such company, he was so inspired by his devotion to Joan and his belief in his own dignity that he carried himself well enough.

"Which in this presence," he asked, speaking, of course, in his native French, which the English leaders knew well, "is the Lord Suffolk?"

Suffolk turned towards Gérardin a frowning face.

"I am he," he answered. "What have you to say to me?"

Gérardin drew from his breast a folded paper.

"I have to read to you," he answered, "this letter from the Maid."

Feigning an indifference he did not feel to the sneers and derisive whispers of the English lords, Gérardin unfolded his paper and began to read, in a voice as clear and as composed as he could manage; and while he read it was a sight worth seeing to watch the changing emotions of amazement and rage which changed the features of the English lords. These were the contents:

"You, William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, and you, John, Lord of Talbot, who call yourselves lieutenants of the King of England, I am sent here by the King of

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Heaven to demand the keys of all the good towns which you have taken by violence in his France. If you do not this you will soon have news of me to your great damage, for I will fall upon you with such a hunting as has not been heard in France for a thousand years.' ”

Fastolf, that was a humorist, and could see things from two sides or from twenty sides, if his wits were tickled, slapped his thigh and cried, “Well crowed, chicken!” But the others that listened, staggered, to this impudent challenge of their so-long uncontested authority stared and gaped and could scarce find breath for their indignation. Suffolk swore a great oath.

“This fooling is over-fooled. My only terms to Orleans are instant and unconditional surrender.”

Gérardin held up his hand in protest, as a signal that there was more to come, and went on with his reading:

“‘If you do not obey,’ says the Maid, ‘I am chief of war, and in whatsoever place in France I shall find your people I will make them go away.’”

Suffolk’s face was red as liver with rage; nor were Talbot and Pole less angry. Suffolk leaned forward and spoke thickly.

“By the rood, master rogue, my answer to your jade will be your body hanging from a high gibbet.”

Gérardin, and Gérardin alone, protested.

“I am an envoy and privileged.”

Suffolk mocked him.

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"You come with no authority from no authority. You are the nameless Jack of a nameless Jill, and shall swing for it."

Gérardin, stung to the quick of his gentility, protested, forgetful of his better defence.

"I am a gentleman of Burgundy!" he cried.

"The more shame for you," said Suffolk, "to be employed on such an errand. But your Maid, as you call her, is a rebel to the true King of France that is true King of England, and rebels have no envoys and can claim no grace."

Neither Talbot nor Pole made the least objection, and Gérardin saw that it was time for him to raise some stronger argument if he hoped to save his skin.

"This, then," he added, "from the Lord Dunois: If any harm be done to me, an envoy, he will incontinently put to death every English prisoner in Orleans."

As he spoke he drew from his breast another paper in which, indeed, Dunois had written to that effect.

Suffolk's brows wrinkled, and it was plain that his wrath would willingly sacrifice any captives for the sake of punishing the ambassador of a madwoman. But Talbot was not of his humor.

"My Lord Suffolk," he said, roundly, "be advised. There are some good friends of mine shut up in Orleans that I would not sacrifice for the envoys of a thousand such witches."

Talbot said little, but he meant much, and Suffolk

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saw that he must give ground. He looked angrily at Gérardin.

"Go your ways," he said. "Tell your dairy-maid she will do well to return to her cows, for I promise her, on my honor, that when I catch her I will burn her as a witch."

The threat sounded lightly in Gérardin's ears, vastly relieved as he was to find himself liberated. But he remembered it later. Now he merely thought of uttering the formula of his office.

"You are warned, Englishmen," he said, with much solemnity—"warned and challenged to wager of battle."

He saluted them with a sufficiency of ease and turned and left their presence, and was duly escorted to his own lines. When he was gone, the English captains gaped at one another. Fastolf, naturally enough, was the first to speak, for, having a saving sense of humor, he was not at all angry.

"There is a high spirit in your petticoat paladin. Would she had come herself instead of the Burgundian lout. 'Tis a green girl, but the face of an angel."

"The girl has a brave spirit," said Talbot, thoughtfully.

Suffolk snapped at him.

"Do you fear the trull?"

"No more than I fear you," Talbot answered, calmly; "but I am very sure she has to be reckoned with."

"I will reckon with the drab," said Suffolk, sourly. "I will flog her, hang her, burn her."

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Talbot's bluff simplicity did not seem impressed by Suffolk's rages.

"You have not caught her yet," he said. "'Twill be time to talk when you hold her in hand."

Neither Suffolk nor his brother could think of anything satisfactory to reply to this argument, while the twinkle in Fastolf's eyes showed that he, at least, found it entirely satisfactory. So thereupon and straightway the conference broke up.

XIX

HOW JOAN CAME TO THE RESCUE

CERTAIN wiseacres among the captains now gathered together at Orleans thought it would be a clever thing to take advantage of the enthusiasm aroused by the coming of the Maid and make a sortie of their own unknown to her, and show what fine fellows they were, and how well they could work without woman or witch. No sooner said than done; they sallied to attack the bastille of Saint Loup without Joan's knowledge, and, for that matter, without Lahire's knowledge, for those that shared in this enterprise knew he was of one mind with the Maid.

Now Joan was weary and sleeping when she suddenly wakened with a cry that her voices counselled her to help the French. Even as she was hurriedly clapping on her armor, Lahire came to her breathless and told her what the busybodies were about. At first she was for upbraiding him, till she saw that he had been kept as much in the dark as she; then, being by this time armored, she mounted her horse and, with Lahire and his Gascons at her heels, went clattering at top speed over Orleans cobble-stones till she

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came to what was called the Burgundy gate. There she found the gate shut and Gaucourt, the governor that had packed cards with the busybodies, standing by to see that she should not pass. He might as well have tried to stay a tornado. Joan called to the sentinels to open the gate. Lahire swore to cleave Gaucourt to the chin if he said them nay. So Gaucourt held his peace, raging, and the gates were opened, and Joan and her little levy swept on to the place of fighting, and only got there just in time. The busybodies had been badly mauled by the English, and were retreating with remarkable speed. Joan rallied them, whipped up their wilting courage, led them afresh to the assault, and drove the English that had sallied out in pursuit of their assailants back again to their shelter.

“See how the gooddens run!” she shouted—this was her nay-word for the English, from their phrase of good-den or good-day. “The tower! the tower!”

Gilles de Laval, who was one, and the worst, of the busybodies, tried to restrain her ardor.

“We cannot take the tower,” he declared.

Joan made a gesture as if she put him on one side.

“Can and will! Assault!—boldly onward!” she commanded.

“Hurrah!” cried Lahire. “Well said, Maid!”

The attacking party now placed scaling-ladders against the tower and began to swarm up them in defiance of the rain of missiles. Joan, carrying her standard, flung herself upon the steps of a ladder.

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"Saint Michael for France!" she cried; and even as she did so an arrow struck her on the shoulder and she reeled from the rung into the arms of Lahire, who carried her, as he might have carried a child, to a place of safety. Pierre and Gérardin came to them, and with them, sinister, the Lord Gilles of Laval.

"Are you hurt, Maid?" Lahire asked, tenderly.

Joan winced.

"A little. Stand round, that none may see me."

Gilles called, loudly:

"The Maid is wounded."

Joan reproved him fiercely.

"Hold your tongue, villain! Would you dishearten our men?"

"If you cry so again," Lahire said, "I will silence you forever."

By this time they had got off Joan's body-armor, and there was the arrow sticking in her white flesh.

"Pull out the arrow," Joan commanded, with closed eyes.

"It will hurt you," Lahire protested.

Joan opened her eyes an instant and spoke peremptorily.

"Do as I say," she ordered, whereupon Lahire pulled out the arrow and, incontinently, Joan swooned.

Instantly Gilles pointed to the bastille, where, indeed, the French began to waver.

"All is lost," he said; "our men are giving way."

On the word Joan opened her eyes.

"You lie, by my Martin!" she said, firmly, and

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made them bind up the wound and put on her armor again. Then she rose and seized her standard, which Gérardin had been holding.

"Can you shift, Maid?" Lahire asked, anxiously.

"Blithely," she answered, and rushed forward to the assault, crying, shrilly:

"Saint Michael for France!"

The wavering French rallied at sight and sound of her.

"The Maid! the Maid!" they shouted, encouraged.

Lahire swung his sword.

"Lahire for the Flower of France!" he thundered; and so he and others swept at the heels of the Maid against the bastille. The assault was renewed, and in a moment, as it seemed, the tower was carried by storm. Shouting hoarse battle-cries, the soldiers swept up the ladders. The Maid was in the thick of them, her white standard flying, her sacred sword held high in air, her girlish face flushed with the joy of conquest, her sweet voice ringing out battle-cries. Lahire, ever at her heels, felt as if he followed some splendid sexless angel from a Book of Hours; he thought of her for the nonce, not as a woman, but as a warlike saint whose sword was the symbol of victory.

One bastille taken and burned, the Maid was all for taking and burning another. Gilles de Laval, ever by her side, was all for moderation, caution.

"Dare we do more?" he asked. "The men will need rest."

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Joan gave him a scornful glance and a scornful answer.

“Rest while an English tower stands outside Orleans? Onward, in the name of God!”

And so she swept onward, with the maddened, enthusiastic Orleanists in her wake; and wherever she went her white armor, her white flag, and her white horse proved the harbingers of victory. None seemed able to stand before her. Grim portals that a few days before had seemed as unsiegable to the good folk of Orleans as the gates of hell were taken with a rush. The French scaled towers as recklessly as if they believed themselves to be immortal. Wherever the white banner flew, wherever the white armor gleamed, there was victory, amazing, unprecedented for the French—there was defeat, amazing, unprecedented for the English. Such a day—it should really be days, but to Dom Gregory’s delighted eyes it shows as one victorious whole—had not been known in France in the memory of living man.

XX

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IT was in the thick of that business that Lahire came upon a burly Englishman who was making French soldiers skip before him, and who acted as if his single arm could redeem the waning fortunes of that day. Lahire shivered as he saw his prowess; then, with an effort, being himself in the islander's way:

"Yield, Englishman!" he called.

The Englishman derided him.

"Tremble at the name of Talbot!" he said, and swung his mighty sword.

Lahire was flagrantly quaking, to Talbot's great astonishment.

"Indeed, I tremble," he admitted. "Yield, nevertheless," he added, with a curious smile.

Talbot shouted and laughed him to scorn.

"A Talbot! a Talbot!"

Lahire gave back a name that was as familiar to the Englishman as was his to the Gascon.

"Lahire! Lahire!"

Talbot was puzzled. His adversary really seemed qualmish, but he carried a famous fighting name.

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He had no time to waste in wondering. They fought, and fought hard, and Lahire was beaten to his knee.

"Yield!" cried Talbot, triumphant, and plied him hard.

Lahire, fighting on his knee, called on his idol:

"Joan! Joan!"

New strength seemed to flow in his veins. He regained his feet, flogged his courage to the goal, and closed with his enemy. Fortune favoring, he struck Talbot down, and, standing over him, placed the point of his sword to the fallen man's throat.

"Yield, rescue or no rescue," he summoned.

Talbot answered, sulkily:

"I yield, rescue or no rescue." Then, as if to console himself, he grunted, "It is the fortune of war."

Lahire helped his fallen foeman to his feet.

"You fight in vain, for we follow an angel."

"Angel or devil," Talbot growled, "the day is hers," and in sullen silence he suffered Lahire to lead him to a place of safety.

Another piece of fortune in that fight fell to Gérardin d'Épinal. He, with Pierre d'Arc and some soldiers, came upon Reginald Pole valiantly battling, and had him at vantage.

"Yield or die!" Pierre cried to him.

Pole, hard-pressed but proud, asked his challenger:

"Are you of gentle blood?"

Pierre shook his head, but from the ring of French about the Englishman Gérardin called:

"I have blood."

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"Are you a knight?" Pole asked, while the strife paused that this nice question should be settled.

"Only a squire," Gérardin admitted.

Pole gazed composedly at the fierce faces about him, red with unfamiliar victory. He was as composed as if he had been treading a measure in some royal hall in London.

"Kneel," he cried to Gérardin, in excellent French—"kneel and take knighthood from my hands, for by my faith and by my lady's favor I will yield to none but a dubbed knight."

Gérardin had enough of Burgundian gentility in him to appreciate the chivalrous privilege that Pole thus claimed, which was quite unintelligible to Pierre and the others. He saluted Pole as gracefully as he could with his sword, and promptly knelt upon the blood-stained field. As he did so, Pole raised his sword and haughtily asked Gérardin's name. Gérardin told him; whereupon Pole touched his shoulder with the sword, saying, "Rise, Sir Gérardin d'Épinal." Then, taking the sword by its blade, he presented it to the newly made knight, who was now risen to his feet.

"There is my sword, and be damned to you!" he said, and was straightway led off the field by his captors, he walking as proudly and holding his handsome head as high as if he were the victor in that fighting.

In another part of the field—according to Dom Gregory—Suffolk and Fastolf, with a little handful of English knights, rallied and held a hurried council of war. Fastolf was roguish and droll; Suffolk was hot

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and angry. To Fastolf life was a jest, even when the joke told against himself; while Suffolk was so brimmed with pride as to have no room in his composition for any sense of humor. It was simply incredible to him that any enterprise with which he was concerned could go amiss, and when he saw towers fall and levies fly before the disdained French, he declined to believe the evidence of his senses.

"We must do this," he raged; "we must do that," he raved.

Fastolf, listening to him with a derisive smile, broke in with a shrug of the shoulders.

"A bird sings to me," he said, "that the day is lost."

The little company of dejected knights could not but agree with him—the completeness of the rout was patent. But furiously Suffolk snapped at him:

"What day is lost while Suffolk lives to save it?"

Fastolf dryly enumerated the list of calamities of which he had knowledge:

"Talbot is a prisoner; your brother is a prisoner; your army is—" He paused and looked around him with an ironic grin, and then added, quizzically, "Where is your army?"

Suffolk answered in a fury of pride:

"I am the best of my brothers, and Talbot's spirit is free in my body."

"Brave words to spin windmills," Fastolf answered, calmly. "I am going home."

And, indeed, faithful to his philosophical conviction

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that a live jackass was a more enviable animal than a dead lion, he did contrive to effect his escape from that scrimmage; for which escape he got great blame and shame, and had his Garter taken from him. But a Garter, as he said, cynically, is little grace to a dead leg, and a live leg can jig it or limp it without a Garter.

Such was Fastolf, and so he goes out of the saga. But Suffolk, despite his lack of humor, had a blustering temper and stuck to it. Ranging over the field, he rallied a small force of stalwart gentlemen and was for the moment as merry as if the earth had teemed, like Jason's field, and yielded him a multitude.

"Charge them again!" he yelled. "A Suffolk! a Suffolk!" he bellowed, as if in that name there lay enchantment, the essential breath of victory. The challenge was answered by Lahire, who was sweeping over the field at the head of a jubilant force. Suffolk was clearly outnumbered, and Lahire called upon him to surrender. But Suffolk was ever pompous, egotistical, and inept.

"Suffolk has sworn to yield to no Frenchman!" he crowed, and slapped his chest with his mailed hand.

Lahire, not a little exhilarated by his capture of the valiant Talbot, was in no mood for heroics, and he sneered at Suffolk's fustian.

"Then you must incontinently die," he said, significantly, and turned to give the word to his Gascons.

The butchery would have begun, for Suffolk was a stickler, and would have died rather than gainsay a

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dareword, but for a nameless gentleman in his petty fellowship of knights who saw how out-swamped their valor was and the pity of ending it all so helplessly at the fag of a lost day. So he whispered quickly into the ear of his vainglorious chief:

“Keep vow and life, too. Yield to no Frenchman. Yield to the French Maid.”

Now Suffolk, if he had no sense of humor and was intolerably vainglorious, was no Baresark, drunk with desire of death, and he found the counsel well thought out. So he bawled to Lahire:

“Suffolk surrenders to none but the woman who saves you.”

Lahire appreciated, even applauded, the punctilio which saved a man's word and also saved the situation. He knew that Suffolk was not really afraid, and he knew also that if he had been in Suffolk's place he would have been in a very agony of fear. Yet he knew, too, that he would not have so compromised with a pompous phrase, and was inclined to think that on the whole he, Lahire, had the better of it.

“Please yourself,” he said, with a courteousness that was, as it were, peppered with mockery, “and in good time.” For at that moment the Maid came galloping towards him, having done the best of her work. Lahire shouted to her:

“Yonder stands my Lord of Suffolk, who will yield to no Frenchman—who will yield to none but you, that are a Frenchwoman.”

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"Not to me," Joan protested—"not to me. To God and the fortune of France."

Suffolk, as we have recorded, was not a humorist, but for once he seems to have made a joke.

"Fortune also is a woman," he said, "and just now she seems undubitably French. Here is my sword."

With that he gave his sword to Joan, who gave it to Lahire, who gave it to some one else to carry; and straightway the Lord Suffolk and his comrades were carried to safe ward, and with them went the end of the English hope of authority upon the Loire.

Joan was dizzy with success; her senses swam in triumph; her eyes brimmed with tears. She stretched out her arms in a rapture to the men.

"Children of France," she cried, "God has fulfilled His promise."

At that moment a French soldier that was lying in his blood lifted his head and, in a broken voice, called out, "God bless the Maid!" and then dropped upon the earth again.

Joan heard and saw, and her heart ached.

"Ah, who is that?" she cried, dashed in a moment from joy to sorrow.

Lahire was practical.

"One of our poor devils that has got his quittance," he explained.

Joan moaned at his explanation.

"My hair stiffens when I see French blood."

She went to where the soldier lay and stooped over him, propping his head on her knee and tending him

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gently, while the rough soldiers about her were suddenly aware that they had hearts in their hard bodies.

"Comrade, be of cheer," she exhorted him, and then bade send for a priest.

"God bless you, Maid," the soldier gasped, gazing at her with dim eyes. He was sinking rapidly, and no priest was yet at hand, so Joan again encouraged him.

"I think you shall be shriven of your sins, for you die for your country and for your King, and by-and-by Saint Michael will welcome you to paradise."

Even as she spoke the soldier died and lay rigid against her knee. The tears rained from Joan's eyes upon the dead man's body.

"Oh, God," she prayed, "have mercy on this man's soul, for he died, as I shall die, for France."

XXI

HOW JOAN ASKED A FAVOR OF THE KING

DOM GREGORY tells, in his own way, what has been told by all other historians of the marvellous Maid, of the amazing series of successes which cleared the Orléanais for the King, who sat at ease while a woman won his battles. We see, in his transcript, Joan sweeping hither and thither, like a fair angel of war, and driving before her, wherever she appears, the astonished and infuriated English. It had been for so long the settled conviction of the invaders that under no circumstances would a force of Frenchmen be found ready or willing to make head against the islanders that it is scarcely, perhaps, to be marvelled at that they dreamed of witchcraft, whispered of witchcraft, talked out loudly of witchcraft, when they found themselves being brushed from their strong places as a gardener brushes leaves from a path. The French themselves had for so long come to acquiesce in the English view of their conduct, and were so deeply convinced that it was impossible for them to rally successfully against the attacks of the invader, that their exultation on finding themselves

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not merely able to act on the defensive, but to carry the war into the enemy's quarters, was as great as that enemy's discomfiture.

It is not necessary to repeat here, point by point, the successive stages of those military exploits which ended in restoring so many tall towns to their allegiance to the King. Orleans, of course, was mad with joy, and would have been delighted if Joan had consented to remain with them indefinitely. But to the Maid the relief of Orleans was only a portion of the task she had set herself, a task which she was to find extending in its scope as time went on. She had made good one-half of her promise to the King, and she was now desirous of redeeming the other half of her pledge. Orleans was free, that was a thing accomplished, a thing of the past. Her next duty was to have the Dauphin crowned king at Rheims, so that he might become indeed, what he was not yet in her eyes or in the eyes of punctilious Frenchmen, the anointed King of France.

But here, as before, Joan found herself opposed by difficulties which would seem incredible if they were not a part of recorded history. The King's fatal unwillingness to take any decided step of any kind showed itself as strongly now, after Joan had established the value of her mission and won so many victories, as before, when the unknown girl from the little village on the borders of Lorraine presented herself to him. In this reluctance to act, even where action was so important to his honor as a man and

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his dignity as a king, he was liberally encouraged by those lovers of the policy of leaving things as they were—my Lord of Tremouille and the Lord Gilles of Laval. They had another and a lusty abettor in the Archbishop of Rheims, who disliked Joan's triumphs and distrusted Joan, and between the three of them they succeeded in stiffening the King into an obstinate disinclination to do the right thing, or, indeed, to do anything at all except amuse himself.

The policy of leaving things as they were throve vigorously, by ironic contrast, in the days immediately succeeding to those enterprises by which the Maid had so vigorously upset that policy in the battle-fields along the Loire. But Joan was not to be disheartened or daunted by the opposition of the sinister junta. It grieved her sore to find such weakness in her King, to find such hostility always at his elbow working against herself; but her voices sustained her, and her sense of her duty to Heaven and her country. Nor was she without the encouragement afforded her by the loyal support of Lahire and Xaintrailles, of whom, curiously enough, Dom Gregory says little, and other captains that had served with her and loved her.

In the end she gained her point, downed all opposition, and persuaded the reluctant Dauphin to take his courage and his resolution in both hands and accompany her to Rheims to be made king, at least in name.

Dom Gregory is eloquent about the military and ecclesiastical splendors of the coronation. He dwells

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with a loving richness of detail upon the gathering of nobles and prelates and ladies, who thronged the ancient church to see the son of Saint Louis invested with the crown of France. For us the most interesting figure of that solemn ceremony is not the half-hearted young man who received the crown from the Archbishop of Rheims, but the whole-hearted young woman who stood near him with her standard in her hand. She had insisted on bringing it with her into the cathedral; it shared the dangers of battle, she said, and it was only right that it should share in the honors of success.

When the newly crowned King had seated himself as sovereign of France, Lahire drew his great sword and was the first to raise a cry of "Noël!" which, taken up by every other man and woman present, rolled through the arches of the church in an exultant thunder that stirred for a moment some heroic pulse in the King, and made pale the face of the Maid with an almost unbearable joy.

When the shouting was over and the coronation business done, the last feast ended and the last cup drained, Joan came to the King and begged him of his clemency to let her depart. She had done what she had promised; she had done what she had been bidden to do; she had relieved Orleans and brought about the coronation at Rheims; and now she asked to be permitted to go home to her mother and her own people. But the King would none of this. Whether he felt some accession of confidence in her and confi-

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dence in himself from the fact that he had actually been touched by the sacred oil and worn on his brows the crown of France, or whether it was the obstinate inclination of a weak spirit to resist anything that a strong spirit desired, it is certain that he refused Joan's request. He had need of her, he said—France had need of her; she could not be suffered to leave him or France just then. It was a strange insistence on the part of a man who had allowed his unworthy counsellors to set every obstacle in the way of Joan's work, that work which she had done so faithfully, even according to her promise. Joan pleaded vainly that she had done all she came to do, but in the end she was obliged to yield to the royal entreaties when they became royal commands.

Having gained his point, Charles graciously entreated her to name some reward for her services. At first she would not ask for anything, but, on being pressed, she entreated the King to remit the taxation of her native village of Domremy. To this the King consented, and by royal edict declared Domremy forever exempt from taxation. That was all the Maid asked for, and that was all the Maid had.

But if the King could not persuade her to accept other marks of his favor, he insisted on showing his gratitude by conferring patents of nobility on her brother, who, it must be admitted, liked his new honors hugely, and was delighted to think that he was now of as good standing as Gérardin d'Épinal and with as good a right to coat-armor. Gérardin, some-

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thing of a stickler in these matters, though much nonsense had been knocked out of him during these weeks of war, still argued the importance of descent, to which Pierre was quick to retort that to carry one of the lilies of France on a shield was, as it were, a kind of adoption into the blood royal. Lahire, who heard this wrangling, lost his temper and told them with some heat that for his part he would rather be of kin to the peasant girl of Domremy than to quarter the arms of every sovereign in Christendom.

Which assertion, made with much mental and physical suffering in consequence of Lahire's struggle between desire to be loyal to his promise to the Maid and desire to swear oaths fitting to the occasion, left the young wranglers over gentility considerably abashed.

One other reward Joan had of her stay in Rheims. As she was going to some ceremonial, with many great lords and valiant captains about her, she saw in the crowd that thronged the street an old face peering at her, the sight of which sent her heart into her mouth. There was doubt on the old face, and wonder, and a little fear; but the moment Joan saw it she quitted her bright company and, running to where the old man stood, flung herself at his feet and caught and kissed his hands. It was her father, old Jacques d'Arc, that had come all the way from Domremy to get a stolen glimpse of the girl he had so upbraided, and who had now worked such wonders and made herself so famous.

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He thought she would be ashamed of him, now that she had risen to such greatness, and it was touching to see his pride and delight in her humble love and bubbling happiness at meeting him. If she could have had her own way, she would have gone back with him to Domremy, and been content to leave forever the shining places to which her destiny had carried her. But this was not to be; so after a while old Jacques d'Arc took leave of her and rode back to Domremy, on a good horse that was given him, much bewildered by his new gentility, and she never saw him again.

XXII

HOW THE KING TOOK HIS EASE

THE King had no sooner carried his point about compelling Joan to stay with him and serve him and France than he seemed to fall back again into his old unworthy subservience to the policy of things as they were and its advocates, La Tremouille and Laval. Joan had consented to stay with him in the desire to do more deeds for king and kingdom, but Charles and those counsellors who, like La Tremouille and the Lord Gilles, were forever futilely negotiating with the Duke of Burgundy, seemed to think that now, if ever, had come the time to rest and take ease and enjoy one's self. Money was a little freer in the royal court now that the King's power was so extended and carried the sacred seal of authority, and Charles much preferred the companionship of the beautiful Catherine and the whiling away of summer days in pleasant entertainments to taking action himself or planning action for others. He treated Joan with attentions for which she cared nothing, furnished her with costly clothes and sumptuous lodging, with trains of servants befitting one of noble station, with rich gifts, with every-

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thing, in fact, except the one thing that Joan wanted—work. Her work was to drive the English out of France. Badly though the English had been beaten, gravely though their strength and confidence had been shaken, they were still a power in the land; they held Paris, the King's capital city, and Joan held it shame that the King should be shut out of his capital.

The Chartier chronicle, passing lightly over that expedition towards Paris which failed through the feebleness of the King and the treachery of his advisers, shows us a melancholy and distracted Maid, fretting her spirit at Sully, where the King had betaken himself and seemed wholly absorbed in his devotion to the Lady Catherine. But at the moment when Joan, irked by a splendor distasteful to her and an idleness more distasteful still, was striving in vain against the hidden forces of things as they were, she got some help from a quarter where she would never have looked for help, even from the Lady Catherine of Laval.

XXIII

HOW CHARTIER SANG IN THE KING'S GARDEN

FAIR gardens lay at the foot of the gray old castle; gardens whose bright coloring smiled at the stern stone; gardens whose summer odors, mounting into air, troubled some sentinel, heavy from heat and needless warder, with unfamiliar thoughts of youth; gardens where lords and ladies rivalled the flowers in pomp of hue and vied with them in grace. There was one garden, loveliest and loneliest of all, which was known as the King's garden. It might, perhaps, have been so named in mockery, as if to suggest that the rest of the royal pleasance, though its gardens belonged to the King, belonged not to him alone, and that the delicate Queen had some share in their sovereignty and the implicit freedom of their walks and orchards.

To the King's garden, however, the Queen never came. It lay at the foot of that tower where, by a tacit understanding, the chamberlain of the palace always contrived to lodge that lady whose eyes the King found brightest, whose lips the King swore were

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the reddest roses on the burning bush of love, whose smile for the time made sunlight for the King's passion to bask in. It was guarded, this way and that, with thickets scarcely less impenetrable than those that in the ancient tale hedged about the enduring sleep of the wonder-girl in the wood. It was, indeed, a garden of gardens. All that clever hands and tireless vigil could do heightened daily its blithe beauty, till it glowed, many-tinted and shimmering, with the rainbow glory of the opal. Though it was called the King's garden, it would have been apter at this time to call it the garden of the Lady Catherine of Laval. Her gracious presence dwelt in the tower at whose base the garden nestled; her beauty took the air in its flowery ways; her body seemed to gain new radiance from its thousand tinctures, new suavity from its thousand perfumes.

There was a spot at the heart of this garden where a terrace drooped in waves of stone to a lawn of cheerful greenness, girdled about with noble trees and graced with marble seats of ample depth and placid curve that made, when piled with silken cushions, an exquisite harborage for languorous flesh. It was in this heart of hearts, on a day when April showed its best, that the master of the garden and that master's mistress played the game of life as if there lay no world outside those leafy barriers; as if, nowhere on the face of an Arcadian earth, fierce men were cutting one another's throats, or haggard women dying in the smoke of burning towns; as if, in that weather-beaten

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neighbor, the aged castle, there paced no great-hearted girl whose lion-spirit fretted in inglorious ease, whose idle hands were often clasped in prayer that they might clasp again the sword and standard of holy war.

Charles and Catherine, with their little court of intimates, had taxed their wits and their limbs for change of entertainment. They had played games till there seemed to be no game left to play. Then they had danced dances, footing it with a brisk dignity on the grass to the melodies of a little company of musicians, till there seemed to be no tunes left to move to, nor no figures left to glide through with the swimming grace of swans on water. As the last dance died away into silence and quiet, Charles, still holding Catherine's hand, which had come to him in the conduct of the measure and which he seemed unwilling to release, led his companion to the marble seat and watched with amorous admiration her body surrender itself to the cushions of blue silk starred with the golden lilies. Then the King turned to Alain Chartier, where he leaned against a pedestal of the terrace—ever the watcher, the chronicler.

"I think, friend poet," he said, gayly, "life should be all like this, a sequence of summer days, colored like apples, jasmine-scented, days for dance and laughter."

He turned to Catherine where she reclined, eying him curiously through lowered lids, and added, in a whisper, "And passion."

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The woman lifted herself a little from her nest of cushions and added, a little sadly, another to her royal lover's list of pleasures.

"And gallant actions," she sighed.

Charles nodded eagerly.

"Yes," he assented. "I would have all the trophies of the tilt-yard to lay them at your feet."

There was the shadow of a frown on Catherine's forehead.

"I was thinking of real war," she said.

Charles raised his hands in protest.

"For Heaven's sake, let us think of something else. We have had real war, we have beaten the English; let us take our ease and enjoy ourselves."

He turned blithely from the pensive woman to the pensive poet.

"Poet Alain," he said, "you seem thick in thought. Are you wooing the muse—have you a song for us?"

The poet, thus stirred from his reverie, moved slowly across the grass towards the King. A lute lay at Charles's feet; Alain stooped and picked it up.

"Here is a new rhyme at your service, sire," he answered. Dandling the lute in his arms, he picked at its strings, making a low, sonorous accompaniment to the words that flowed from his lips:

"The Flower of France, the lily, the glory-flower of gold,
Burns on the banners of our kings from fighting days of old.
Where pagan or where traitor ranges in arms arrayed,
There in the face of Fate is the Flower of France displayed,
Over the field to flame when the tale of the day is told.

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"He that shall serve the lily has promised God to be bold
So long as he has horse to ride or naked sword to hold.
He must uphold on foundered horse, must guard with
broken blade—
The Flower of France.

"But never a son of Adam, since the song of man was scrolled,
Has followed the golden lily, by wood or wave or wold,
To triumph after triumph for which the people prayed
In vain through years of anguish, as has the matchless
Maid,
The girl with the soldier spirit shrined in the angel mould—
The Flower of France!"

As Alain finished his song the courtiers murmured
applause, and Catherine, leaning forward with beautiful,
flushed face, cried:

"You have rhymed to some purpose."

Charles frowned and protested peevishly.

"I asked for a love-poem."

"Mine is a love-poem, sire," said Chartier, boldly—
"the love of France for the Maid."

Charles fretted impatiently.

"The Maid, the Maid! Must we never hear of anything
but the Maid?"

"Never of aught better," said Chartier, sturdily,
and won the approval of Catherine's eyes.

The courtiers assumed airs of deep abstraction.
Charles rose.

"Enough. Your muse is too martial for this garden."

Chartier was not abashed.

"One more martial than my muse would tread this
grass. The Maid begs for audience."

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"May I have no peace?" Charles grumbled. "What does she want?"

"Speech with her King," Chartier explained.

The King waved denial.

"This is my paradise, where love reigns and arms are forgotten. I am much bound to the Maid, but my leisure is sweet to me. Say I will see her another time, another day."

Catherine rose from her nest of cushions, advanced and put her hand on the King's arm.

"Ah, sire," she entreated, "I pray you no other day or time but this day and time."

Charles looked at her in surprise.

"Do you, too, conspire against my quiet?" he asked.

Catherine pleaded:

"See the Maid—for my sake."

Charles stooped to kiss her hand.

"For your sake, anything." He turned to Chartier. "You may bring her by-and-by."

He dismissed his courtiers.

"Leave us, friends."

Chartier went up the terrace steps on his errand. The court folk, lords and ladies, carried their smiles and their finery in different directions. Catherine was going, too, when Charles stayed her.

"Not you, sweetheart," Charles said, tenderly. "I wish you might never leave me."

"I fear, sire," said Catherine, gravely, "my mind, like Master Chartier's muse, is too martial to please you. I have but one thought in my mind."

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"And that thought?" asked the King.

"Paris," Catherine answered, solemnly. "Paris is in the hands of the English still. You should wrest it from them."

Charles smiled at her earnestness.

"You are a changeable fay. A while ago you were all for 'Love and let the world go by.' To-day you would make me a hero."

Catherine insisted.

"You are not rightly lord of France while your capital is in the hands of the English. You should march on Paris with the Maid."

Charles shook his head.

"That is not your brother's counsel. He says the Maid has done all she can do, and that our best policy is to win the Duke of Burgundy away from the English."

"I pray you, sire," Catherine requested, "do not tell my brother how I advise you—but you should march on Paris with the Maid."

Charles pondered for a moment, then looked at the beautiful woman with a pleased smile.

"Well, sweet, I will ride to Paris if you will ride with me."

Catherine's face, that had brightened at his opening words, darkened at the close.

"That cannot be. The Maid would not suffer it."

Charles struck his hands together angrily.

"The Maid would not suffer it! Saint Denis, is this Maid lord of France? What is our love to her?"

CHARTIER SANG IN THE KING'S GARDEN

"She is the Maid," Catherine answered, sadly.

Even as she spoke she turned pale and Charles turned red at sight of a next presence that had come upon them, stealing stealthily through the garden. Catherine was pale with vexation to see Gilles de Laval; Charles was flushed with the certainty to find in him a partisan against the Maid, of whom his royal indolence was woefully weary.

As Gilles came slowly down the pergola, the King called to him:

"My lord, in good time. What do you think this sweet sister fears?—that the Maid would not suffer her to ride with us to Paris."

Gilles smiled dubiously.

"I cannot think the Maid would act so unmannerly."

"If she should presume—" Charles began, in a rage, but Catherine stopped him.

"Sire, no more of this, I pray," she cried. Then she burst into tears, and, covering her face with her hands, she ran away from him through the rose-trees.

Charles followed her flight with anxious eyes.

"Heaven's mercy!" he sighed. "I would not have her weep for all the world. I have promised to see the Maid. Bide here and bring me news of her coming."

Gilles tried to detain him.

"But, sire, the Duke of Burgundy—" he began.

Charles interrupted, impatiently:

"What is Burgundy to me with my sweet in tears?"

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Without another word he hurried off after Catherine and soon was lost to sight in the depths of the garden. Gilles looked after him contemptuously. Then he took up the lute that Chartier had laid down and seated himself on the stone bench, picking at its strings carelessly. He was thinking how he could work this to a breach between the King and the Maid, if he stiffened the King's whim to carry his sweetheart Parisward. While he was musing Lahire appeared on the terrace and, catching sight of Gilles, descended the steps.

"My Lord of Laval," Lahire said, "I have been seeking you. Why are you so hot to prevent the march to Paris?"

Gilles answered him lazily.

"Take your complaints to the King, messire; 'tis the King's will directs the King's army."

Lahire grunted.

"By my sword, messire, the King is ill-advised to keep the Maid from Paris."

"Do you still believe in the Maid?" Gilles drawled, provocatively.

"What can a man do but believe?" Lahire answered. "A country girl comes to the King, talking tall, promising miracles—a lass to laugh at. But in a twink her tall talk turns to taller deeds and the miracles of yesterday are realities to-day."

"She has done something," Gilles admitted, lightly.

Lahire caught him up hotly.

"You stint like a niggard. She has relieved Or-

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leans, crowned the King at Rheims, and she has banged the English wherever she meets them till they wonder if Cressy and Agincourt are not dreams. Something?"

"Maybe she is a witch," Gilles insinuated.

Lahire struck his hands together.

"I would welcome witch or wizard that has done her deeds for France. To see the lilies flying over cities that the lean leopards have guarded too long, to see Englishmen running from Frenchmen instead of Frenchmen running from Englishmen—these are good sights to see. The man is traitor to France and the King who delays the march to Paris."

Gilles looked at him through lowered lids.

"Do you speak at me?" he asked, and Lahire answered:

"I speak at you if you delay the Maid's march."

Gilles sneered at him.

"You are in love with the wench, and your desires blind you."

Lahire flamed into white rage.

"If you speak so again I will cut your heart from your body and cram your mouth with it."

Gilles leaped to his feet.

"Are you for battle, bandit?"

"Here and now!" cried Lahire. "Up sword and out."

Lahire and Gilles drew their swords and were about to engage when their quarrel was interrupted. Poet Chartier came onto the terrace, conducting Joan to

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her audience with the King. Joan was now dressed like a noble lord, in spring's blithe livery of green and white, but her face was not so radiant as when she wore coarse stuff instead of rich silk. As Chartier beheld the imminent brawl, he cried, aloud:

"Sirs, the Maid!"

Then he and Joan descended the steps quickly, while Lahire and Gilles lowered their swords. Joan looked angrily at the disputants.

"Are there no English left to fight, that the King's men brawl among themselves?"

The two men stood silent. Chartier, ever curious, interposed.

"Your cause of quarrel, for my chronicle?"

Lahire shrugged his shoulders.

"By my sword, I cannot remember. Our spirits moved contradictory over some point of strategy."

Gilles made him a salutation.

"Even good friends differ, gallant captain."

It was plain that Chartier would get no explanation.

"Where is the King?" he asked, anxious to fulfil his promise to the Maid.

"I will bring you to him," said Gilles. He added, speaking to Joan:

"He bids me ask you to wait him here."

Joan bowed her head.

"I will wait."

Gilles and Chartier went their way together through the rose-trees in the direction taken by the King.

XXIV

HOW LAHIRE WENT A-WOOING

“**W**HY did you quarrel?” Joan asked, when they were alone.

Lahire explained.

“Because he works on the King’s weakness and keeps you idle.”

Joan gave a cry of despair.

“Dear saints in heaven, the King has but to march on Paris and Paris is his.”

Lahire looked gloomy.

“But the King will not march on Paris while he has such friends as the Lord Gilles of Laval at his elbow.”

Joan sighed.

“What have I done that they are all against me?”

“You did in a few days what they could not do in many years,” Lahire told her, bluntly; “and they gibe at your victories. I wish you well out of it.”

“Sometimes I wish as much myself,” Joan said, sadly.

The man and the woman were silent for a little space. Then Lahire broke the silence, looking curiously at Joan.

“I have a word to say to you.”

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Joan came out of her reverie.

“Speak it.”

Lahire took his heart in his hands, as it were.

“I love you,” he blurted out, hurriedly.

Joan smiled kindness on him.

“I hope you do, friend.”

Lahire was not to be put from his purpose so. He was resolved to speak, and his words came with a rush.

“I don't love you friend-fashion. I love you hotly, as a strong man loves a sweet maid. The world is thick with men like me—only rich in one maid like you. I have no more title to you than the best king in Christendom, but I have a man's right to love you, and so I must speak and you must hear me.”

“Certainly you must speak, comrade,” Joan said, pleasantly. “I am very willing to hear you.”

Lahire gave a sigh of satisfaction.

“Come, that's a good beginning. See here, Joan, we were friends from the start. I would have taken you for my mate blithely, and defended you against the world, but I was not worthy to love you then, or to tell my love. Now, judged by a rough measure, I am. You know my secret. Well, you have made me a brave man.”

Joan said, in a low voice:

“You are a very valiant, honorable, loyal soldier, and true man.”

Lahire's face flushed with pride, but the stream of his speech quickened.

“The whole world is just Joan to me. You sweeten

HOW LAHIRE WENT A-WOOING

my meat and my sleep and my dreams. Alone, I say your name over and over again, as children whisper spells for sunshine—Joan, Joan, Joan—and, with every time of telling, its meaning is dearer, and I long so hotly and fear so deeply that I weep in laughter and grin through tears, and it is all Joan, Joan. I love you, my darling.”

Joan went up to Lahire and, laying her hands on his shoulders, looked steadfastly in his face.

“I know,” she said, “you tell me the truth, and I know that you speak because you must speak lest you should die in your silence. What would you have me do?”

“I will tell you,” Lahire answered. “Come out of all the scuffle and the muss. You have won the day. You have done enough. Women are meant to marry, even the women that can lead armies to victory and crown kings. The Maid has served France; might not the wife, too?”

Joan took her hands off Lahire’s shoulders, but she still looked steadily and kindly at him.

“Have you said your say to me, comrade?” she asked.

Lahire faltered, dubious.

“Yes and no. I want words to tell my hope. You and I, Joan, quietly, gently, happily, side by side, lovers and comrades, with God’s favor, to the end. If I spoke like your angels I could say no more, though I might say it a thought better.” His eyes pleaded for him, and his out-stretched hands.

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Joan answered him tenderly and gravely.

"You have said your heart's say very well, and I think no woman could help being glad to know that a true man loved her. And I want you to know that I understand your love, that I am not ignorant of the strength and beauty and righteousness of a man's great longing for the woman he loves." She spoke now in a slightly lighter manner: "But I want to ask you a question or two, my friend, in this grave matter."

"Well, Joan?" Lahire wondered.

Joan questioned him warily.

"If you had taken service with a king or duke or other great lord, and had pledged your word and hand that you would serve him to the lees of your blood, and if his enemy came to you privily and said, 'Here are castles, lands, moneys for you if you leave your lord and ride with me,' how would you answer?"

"You know how I would answer," Lahire protested.

"Indeed I do," said Joan. "And as you would answer him, so I must answer you, though it grieves me to deny your desire. But I have taken such service as demands all my fidelity—"

Lahire interrupted her.

"The King will soon have no need of service."

Joan shook her head.

"The King I serve is King of the King of France, and He needs my service for a while longer, until the day I die."

"Do not speak of that," Lahire implored her.

HOW LAHIRE WENT A-WOOING

Joan sighed.

"I am ignorant and cannot speak wisely save by my voices; but I think that while most women are meant to share a man's life and give him children, that he and she may live again, there are some called apart for lonelier duties, and I am one of these."

Lahire cried her name.

"Joan!"

Joan spoke again.

"If it were right or possible for me to love, I might love you—"

Lahire fell on his knees and took and kissed her hand.

"Joan!" he cried again.

Joan went on, quietly:

"But I may not in that way be happy. I may not share joy and sorrow of women. I must go where my voices bid me, a maiden and alone. In your love for me, help me in this. You will suffer, for your love is a strong thing; but in time to come you will be glad to have suffered for the sake of the girl in her grave."

Joan suddenly buried her head in her hands and burst out crying. Lahire rose and stood reverently before her.

"Dear Joan," he said, "dear love, dear Maid, I will help you if I may. I have grown a new man in your company, though I fear I can only hope for heaven by keeping close at your heels. But I will say no more on this matter, now or hereafter. Do not cry, Joan."

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Joan beamed on him through her tears.

"I am not often a cry-baby, but I am young, and sometimes the thought of what must be frightens me."

"What must be?" Lahire asked, anxiously.

"I cannot tell you," Joan said. "Indeed, I do not know. But I shall be glad to welcome you in heaven, God's soldier, my soldier."

Then the brave Maid and the true man clasped hands, and even on that clasp Chartier came to them through the rose-trees, the bearer of news.

"The King will be here swiftly. You are to wait for him here, Maid." He turned to Lahire. "Shall we walk awhile in the orchard?"

Lahire guessed that Chartier's suggestion was no more than an interpretation of the king's wish to speak with the Maid alone. "As you will," he said, and went with the poet down the long pergola that led to the King's orchard. But ere he was out of sight he turned once and looked back, and saw Joan standing as he had left her, very still, the Flower of France in the midst of a glory of roses, and the sunlight touching her like a benediction.

XXV

HOW JOAN SAVED A SOUL ALIVE

JOAN stood where Lahire had left her, still in prayer. She did not hear a woman's footstep gliding over the grasses. The woman was Catherine, coming from the King by the King's wish, his wish inspired and guided by the will of the Lord Gilles.

Catherine stood awhile in silence, watching the rapt Maid. Twice she essayed to speak, and her heart failed her. Now, at length, she compelled herself, and called, softly:

"Maid."

Joan turned at the call, and, seeing Catherine, drew back a little and her face grew stern. Catherine addressed her appealingly.

"I come from the King."

"He should have sent another messenger," Joan observed, coldly. She could have no tenderness for this beautiful sinner who was the bane of the King's soul.

"Why should you deny me," Catherine entreated, "if I can serve France?"

"You do not serve France," Joan answered. "You

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are the false queen of the King's false paradise. What have you to do with France or me?"

"Much," Catherine retorted. "For the King bids me tell you he will ride to Paris—"

Joan gave a cry of pleasure. Catherine dashed it with the addition:

"If I ride with him."

Joan drew herself up, the image of rebuke.

"My army is the army of God. You cannot go."

Catherine pleaded, nearly weeping.

"The King would not go but that I begged him till he consented—on those terms."

Joan was marble-hard.

"Since I have led the levies of France it has been my law that no light woman shall follow the camp. What is law for the soldier is law for the King in my army."

Catherine tried to wear an air of authority, which would have served her well with any man or woman save just this woman.

"If the King commands?"

Joan made a military salute for the King's name, but she spoke with the same fixed determination:

"I serve him with all my heart; but there is a King of Kings whom I serve with all my soul, and his angels guide my way."

Catherine crossed herself, and, annoyed as she was, admired and wondered.

"You are very proud in your purity."

"I hope I am not proud in any way," Joan answered,

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evenly. "I do not judge you. I do not understand you. But I will have none such as you with my army."

Catherine crept a little closer to her, and spoke in a low tone.

"Chance might have made you what it made me."
Joan crossed herself.

"There is no chance in the world. Only God's war against Satan."

Catherine came in despair to a desperate resolve.

"If God had willed that I, like you, had been born a peasant, that I, like you, should be lifted from my lowliness, I to this as you to that?"

Joan turned away, full of repugnance for the delicate sin that reigned in the King's paradise.

"It would not be God's uplifting to lift you to this," she said, as one who speaks the last word.

But a later word was with Catherine as she whispered:

"Do you remember the well beyond the wood and the girl who told you the tale of the bluebird?"

Joan turned on her and spoke quickly.

"What do you know of the well beyond the wood and the girl who told me tales? She was my sister Catherine. She died young."

Catherine stretched out her hands to Joan in a passion of appeal.

"I am Catherine of Arc, and I wish I had died long ago."

Joan was close to her in an instant, staring into her face.

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"You! Let me look at you. You have something of my mother in your eyes. But men call you sister to Gilles de Laval."

"That is a lie," Catherine wailed. "I was in service at Vaucouleurs and he took a fancy to me and lured me away. I was one of many such, but he liked me well, for the others died strange deaths, and I have lived."

There was a pause of such stillness that one could hear the rose-blooms sway in the soft wind. Then Joan said, sadly:

"You have something of my mother in your voice."

Catherine went on anew with her pitiful story.

"Lately he brought me to Chinon as his sister. He had taught me many arts—to read and dance and sing and please in love. I was a snare set for the King, and I caught the King and hold him."

"You must set him free," Joan said, finally, but not unkindly.

"I love him!" Catherine cried, passionately, "and he loves me."

Joan was ice to this plea.

"I know nothing of love, but if this be love I thank Heaven for my ignorance."

"Sister, sister," Catherine moaned, "the King is gentle, chivalrous, devout; the other was cruel, vicious, impious. We have served the Black Mass, prayed to Satan, God forgive me."

Joan crossed herself and looked up at the sky.

"God will forgive you if you return to God," she

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promised; fervently. Catherine made a sudden move as if to kneel at Joan's feet, but the Maid's steady gaze stayed her.

"You seem an angel," Catherine said. "Tell me what to do."

Joan made a gesture as if she were washing her hands clean of such praise.

"I am a girl of the people, to whom angels sometimes speak. You must leave the King, for you are the King's enemy. You must leave the world that has been your enemy."

Catherine hugged her rage, her pain, her despair, and the three pangs wrung bitter protest from her.

"You have never lived—never loved. How can you counsel me?"

"I have never loved," Joan answered, simply, "but I have lived to some purpose. There are better things in life than wooing and wantoning. I do but say what the wind sighs in my ears, and the voice of that wind is the voice of Heaven."

Catherine swayed, as the rose-blooms swayed in the wind, and hid her face in her hands.

"I cannot do this," she groaned, as she thought of love and her bright life and the pride of her triumph.

"Then," said Joan, "you go one way, I another. But you may not follow my army."

"Yet I am your sister," Catherine protested, trying to win pity from kinship. All she won was a sudden show of Joan's scorn.

"Not, therefore, more to be comforted in evil-doing.

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If my brother—God pardon the thought—were to betray France, should I think gentlier of him than of any nameless traitor? Shall I think gentlier of you than the poor drabs who wanted to tramp with their soldiers, whom I banished from my camp? You wear fine clothes and shed sweet essences, while they go tawdry and smell of their sweat. But the sin of the one is the sin of the other, and calls to Heaven with the same voice for judgment.”

Catherine wrung her hands.

“Joan, Joan, have pity!” she sobbed, flesh and spirit hot at war.

Joan, still standing, suddenly extended her arms in supplication to the blue heaven.

“Dear God,” she prayed, with set face and imploring eyes, “if ever I have served you, if in any wise my nothingness is acceptable in your sight, give me this woman’s soul, though I buy it at the price of shame and failure and despair. Cast me into the Valley of the Shadow, but lift her to the light. Refresh her heart with the memories of childhood and of church-bells, of the serene faces of good men and good women that are the watch-fires of the army of the saints. Cleanse her spirit with the waters of Thy pity; touch her lips with the white fire of purity; make her again as chaste in soul as was the girl who told fairy stories by the well beyond the wood.”

As Joan’s prayer had sped, Catherine had bent before its tensity. When it ended she gave a great cry and threw herself at Joan’s feet.

HOW JOAN SAVED A SOUL ALIVE

"Joan! Joan!" she screamed, in an agony of resignation. "I am yours. Do with me as you will."

Instantly Joan's cold manner softened, the love she had longed to show was set free, and, stooping, she caressed her sister's head tenderly.

"Sister, dear sister," she said, and said no more, for on the instant Charles and Gilles, Lahire and Chartier came quickly through the rose-trees.

When he saw the two women so close together, Charles hurried forward.

"Sweet, what has happened?" he cried, in fear.

Racked by her lover's voice, Catherine made to rise, while she sighed to Joan:

"Let me go to him."

Joan gently restrained her.

"If you go to him, you leave me."

"Why is she at your feet?" Charles demanded, fiercely, of Joan.

Joan answered as a sibyl might have answered some rash questioner.

"King of France, there is a King above you who has called this woman from among your subjects to dwell in His house."

Even the King shrank before the calm majesty of Joan. Gilles, seeing this, judged it time to interfere.

"This is sorcery!" he yelled, and made as if to seize Catherine. But Lahire in an instant clipped him round the body and gripped him hard.

"Keep back!" Lahire ordered. "This is between the King and the Maid."

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Charles, cold with grief, called lovingly to Catherine:
"Sweeting, deny this madness."

"Speak," Joan whispered to the kneeling woman.
And Catherine, still at Joan's feet, spoke.

"I am resolved to leave the world and take the
vows."

Charles was very pale, and he trembled, yet he tried
to command like a king.

"I forbid this. Take her from the Maid."

But Lahire still held Gilles tight, and Chartier
watched, irresolute. Joan took her sword, in its
sheath, from her girdle, and held it like a cross over
the head of the kneeling Catherine.

"In God's name, Charles of France, come not be-
tween this woman and her soul. Over her head I hold
the sign of Heaven."

Then Charles turned, with a groan, and ran like a
madman through the rose-trees, weeping and cursing.
But none interfered with Joan's victory.

XXVI

HOW JOAN STARTED FOR PARIS

JOAN had won a victory, but the conquest had cost her dear. Catherine had been constant to her reformation. The King's prayers could not move her, nor the ineffectual threats of the Lord Gilles, who had now, indeed, no means of menace, and hated Joan the more keenly for that she knew his secret, though she knew and kept her peace. The woman Joan had won had seen her lover no more. She had gone at once to the convent of Our Lady of Charity, the cold of the cloister had closed upon her, and there was an end of her beauty and her sin.

But the unhappy King never forgave Joan for the victory that robbed him of his dear. He refused to see her again. King of France though he was, he dared not hurt her in such a quarrel, dared not strike at her directly. So he struck at her indirectly. In this he was aided by La Tremouille, who had always hated Joan, and by Gilles, who hated her worse than ever. Joan's hope, dream, entreaty was that the King should march on Paris. The King, encouraged by La Tremouille, encouraged by Laval, would not

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march on Paris, would not see the Maid, would not help the Maid. At last, on the insistence of Lahire, this much was wrung from the fuming King, that Lahire's company, with such other forces as the captains that still believed in Joan could raise, might form an army of a kind and follow the Maid's lead on the way to Paris. That was the most Lahire could get, and he and Joan had to be content with it, or be discontented, for all the sulky King cared, and his traitorous advisers.

But Lahire and the captains that clung to Joan were brisk fellows that raised a very creditable army, small in numbers but very stalwart of purpose, and the King could not forbid an enterprise which, after all, was for his own honor and profit. So it came about that on a fair spring morning Joan rode once more at the head of an army out of the town where the King she had crowned, the King she had saved, denied her and raged at her. Just outside the town was a little wayside church, and into this church Joan must needs go to say a prayer to help her on her way.

When the church door swung behind her she found herself almost in darkness, save for a few votive candles by the altar.

Joan walked slowly down the dim little church to the altar, where she knelt and prayed, earnestly, passionately.

"My saints, my saints, do not abandon me to my agony. In the field and in the forest I was never alone, for ye were ever with me; but now I am very

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lonely in crowded places and the company of princes, for I hear you not, see you not, though I hunger and thirst for sight of you, for sound of you. For me the whole world is dumb when you are silent, empty when you are absent. There is no meaning in the wind, no purpose in the sun, and I tremble with the great fear. Dear saints, pity me, strengthen me, lighten my heart, uplift me from this pit of grief in which I lie, divide the veil of darkness, that I may behold the stars."

As she prayed it seemed to her that a vision of Saint Michael appeared in a great white light above the altar, and that the saint spoke to her.

"Joan of Arc, Joan of Arc, Joan of Arc, you bought the safety of a soul at the price of shame and failure and despair. Do you regret that victory? Do you dread this defeat?"

Joan answered, submissive:

"Blessed Saint Michael, I do not regret what is done, nor shall I dread what must be while your voice sustains my spirit. When shall my time come?"

Then it seemed to Joan that the saint answered:

"Before the feast of Saint John."

Joan pleaded piteously.

"So soon, dear God, so soon? Grant me a little longer for the sake of France."

Then it seemed to Joan that the saint answered and said again:

"Before the feast of Saint John."

Still Joan entreated.

"I am so young. I have so much to do. I knew

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my time was short, but always in my heart a hope kept singing that the hour might be postponed.

Then it seemed to Joan that the saint answered and said again, a third time:

“Before the feast of Saint John.”

Then the vision of Saint Michael vanished, the white fire faded, and all was dim in the little church. Joan seemed to be sinking in waves of oblivion as she called:

“Sweet saint, do not leave me; the world reels around me, blackness of darkness drowns me; I hear the thunders of the bell of doom.”

She fell in a heap at the altar-steps and lay there senseless. How long she lay there she never knew, but presently she heard the church door open and the footsteps of Lahire on the flags.

Lahire, groping in the dusk, called to her:

“Joan, Maid, where are you?”

The sound of the true voice came to her, piercing the shadows that swathed her spirit. She lifted her head and turned to him, crouching on her hands and knees.

“I am here,” she said, and her voice was but a wisp of a voice, and its piteousness chilled Lahire to the heart. But when he got to the steps of the altar Joan was kneeling before the shrine with clasped hands and dry eyes, and he heard her murmuring the “Ave Maria” with a voice as steady as his own in command. He waited until the “Amen” fell from her lips, waited a space thereafter, and then, bending over her, whispered:

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“Joan, our men are ready, our horses restive. The road lies white before us towards Paris.”

Joan rose from her knees and crossed herself. Then she turned to her comrade and he saw that her face was drawn and white. But she spoke to him in a steady voice.

“Come,” she said, “let us ride together towards Paris.”

Lahire swung back the door for her and she passed out into the bright morning air, and was in the saddle before he had passed the threshold. Lahire swung himself onto his big black horse and waited for her to give the word to march. But Joan seemed preoccupied; she leaned over her charger's neck and stroked his white mane, and the horse that loved her whinnied at her touch.

“Paris,” she said, sadly. “Oh, dear God, what a great meaning is shut in a little word.”

Lahire stared at her, and she shook herself and gave the word “Forward,” and the cavalcade started along the white high-road at a brisk trot towards their goal.

XXVII

HOW JOAN PRAYED FOR A BABE

THERE is a tale told of Joan in the time after she left the angry King at Sully and before she came to Compiègne which reads like some page taken from some *Lives and Miracles of the Saints*. She was for a while at Lagny-sur-Marne, and while she was there a little child no more than three days old came to its death. It had lived so short a while that it had not been baptized, and, being unbaptized, must needs, therefore, be buried in unconsecrated ground, to the great grief of all its kindred. There were some girls of the place who came to Joan and entreated her to join with them in prayers for the dead baby. Joan went with the girls, and they bore the little body into the church and laid it before the shrine of Our Lady; and there they all prayed long and earnestly together, Joan kneeling a little in front, in her bright armor, like a young and chivalrous saint, and the girls behind and about her, hoping against hope, while they all entreated Heaven to restore the infant to life, if only for so brief a space of time as might allow it to be received into the Church. Now, as they knelt and

HOW JOAN PRAYED FOR A BABE

prayed, Joan, with her eyes fixed upon the little body that lay in front of her, suddenly saw it move, and then color came into the pale cheeks, the closed eyes opened, and the mouth yawned thrice.

The girls cried out, "A miracle!" and ran swiftly for the priest and brought him, and when he came to Joan's side he saw that the child was, indeed, alive, and he straightway baptized it and received it into the Church. And as soon as he had done so the little flame of life that had been so strangely rekindled flickered out again, and the dead baby was buried in consecrated soil.

Lahire had been with Joan when the girls came for her, and he followed her on her gentle errand, and knelt in the back of the church and watched her and her companions as they prayed; and later he stood by Joan's side, and they laid some flowers together on the newly made grave in the church-yard. But of this wonder or marvel or miracle, or whatever you may please to call it, Joan would not speak at all to Lahire thereafter. "It was the will of God," was all she would say, and so put him off; and when he saw that she did not wish to speak of the matter, he held his peace. But later on he was to hear this gracious act included in the lying list of charges brought against her.

XXVIII

HOW JOAN FARED AT COMPIÈGNE

WHEN Joan left the King and rode with Lahire to where there was fighting, instead of feasting, the news of her coming was soon spread abroad among the English, and had much of its old effect. The terror which the Maid had inspired by her astonishing triumphs at and around Orleans was still fresh in the enemy's memory, and, as now Joan with her little army began to work new havoc among the invaders, her old fame flamed up in their eyes and the old fear rekindled in their hearts.

She fought many engagements with success, relieved this town and that town from leaguer, till the enemy began again to regard her as invincible through witchcraft; and, as Lahire said, with gallant Gascon extravagance, desertion became the rule rather than the exception in the invaders' ranks.

So, riding and fighting, Joan made her way to Compiègne, which was being menaced in more than one direction: by the English under Suffolk, Arundel, and Montgomery; by John of Luxembourg, a nephew of the Duke of Burgundy, with his Picards; and by the

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great duke himself. For the policy of leaving things as they were had come, as far as the French jackals of the Duke of Burgundy were concerned, to this unlucky conclusion. The truce which the Lord of Tremouille and the Lord of Laval had regarded, or had professed to regard, as so important had come to its end. It had served chiefly to afford time for the duke to marry himself with great splendor to a princess of Portugal, and to hold a tournament in which French knights rode for the honor of France, Pothon de Xaintrailles among them. These amenities over, the duke was now ready and willing to take the field again.

All this while the King of France showed no interest in the doings of Joan; he acted rather as if, as far as he was concerned, she had ceased to exist. He sought to deaden his fierce regret for his lost lover in renewed pleasures; and, as if to emphasize more emphatically his repudiation of the Maid, he welcomed to his court any impostor or charlatan who professed with a grave face and brave words to be intrusted with a mission to save France.

At last there came a time when the threatened pressure on Compiègne began to tighten. Joan and her company were away from the city, doing good work elsewhere, when the news came to her of its peril. Her fellowship was small, little more than four hundred men, all told. A small force, indeed, to attempt the defence of a place likely to be so heavily invested. But Joan, though she knew herself to be

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living in the shadow of doom, never lost heart when there were hard knocks to be given and difficult work to be done. She was all for a rapid ride to Compiègne, whence she might strike a blow at the enemy before the enemy knew of her arrival, a blow that might easily, in its unexpectedness, result in his rout. There were some doubters among her following as to the wisdom of this course; but Lahire had no doubts; what the Maid said was good enough counsel to guide him, and where he and she agreed there was no room for argument.

So Joan and her little army rode as swiftly and as secretly as might be to Compiègne and entered the town, to the great surprise and joy of the governor, Monsieur de Flavy, and the good people of the place, who had begun to think themselves in very hard stress of danger, and who now, seeing Joan, with Lahire and his Gascons accompanying her, began to halloo before they were out of the wood.

Soon after their arrival in the town, Joan, with Lahire, ascended one of the tallest towers of the fortifications to reconnoitre from that position of advantage. The day was gray and dreary; it had rained hard through the night, and the low meadow-lands about the Oise were sodden and clogged with water which had formed in many places, spreading pools over which birds skimmed, flying low. The sky was much of a livid, greenish gray, with a fringe of yellow light low on the horizon and patched with ragged masses of black clouds that moved sluggishly, swollen

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with more rain to come. A chill wind blew dismally over the marshy meadows, driving the straggling wisps across the sky and shaking the boughs of the trees into the most doleful music.

It would have been hard for the highest spirits to withstand the depressing influences of such a scene and such a day. Its gloom and its menace might have chilled the heart of the most restless reveller, and tinged the mind of a philosopher with superstitious fears. Lahire was something of a reveller, and, unconsciously, something of a philosopher, but he was proof against the tyranny of the foul day, and what chiefly interested him in his purview of the landscape was that he could see no signs of immediate action on the part of the enemy. That the enemy was near them he knew well, but that the enemy was lying quiet was infinitely to Lahire's advantage. We shall be able to take them unawares, he thought, and turned to say as much to his companion; but the words died on his lips as he saw the melancholy on her face.

Joan looked sadly over the river and the low-lying river-meadow.

"Over there is Paris—Paris, the heart of France; Paris, that should be the King's Paris, and is the Paris of a little English child."

Lahire made a desperate assumption of mirth.

"Nurse shall take baby Harry home to England when we give Paris to the King."

"When we give Paris to the King!" Joan echoed,

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wistfully. "Between us and Paris lie a many English soldiers, a many soldiers of Burgundy."

Lahire strove to cheer her.

"When have you cared what lay between you and victory? You seem in the dumps, Maid."

Joan was not to be cheered.

"My heart is cold," she said, dully, "and my eyes are hot as if I had been weeping. Yet I have not wept."

"It were pity to weep before victory," Lahire suggested, with forced hilarity.

Joan pointed to the warring heavens.

"Can you read victory in that frightful sky, in those foul clouds that murder the sunlight, in those wan spaces that look like ghosts? I always think there is some link between my fortunes and the features of the sky. When I triumph, the sky shows fair; when I fail—see now."

"It is possible," Lahire said, thoughtfully. "They say that before Cæsar fell there were strange signs and portents in the sky."

"I do not know who Cæsar was," Joan admitted, simply, "but I do not think he can have done more than I did, who came from the fields to save France and crown the King."

There was nothing vainglorious in her speech—just a statement of fact which Lahire indorsed cordially. After a pause she went on.

"Ah, you used to feel afraid, but you have conquered that feeling. I feel afraid now who never knew fear before."

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Lahire clapped her reassuringly on the back. He could not bear to see her downhearted.

"Nonsense, Joan! Your soldiers are with you, tried fighting-men; your comrades are with you, led by splendid memories."

Joan touched sadly on one absence.

"The King is not with me."

Lahire saluted an absent, distant King, of whom he was beginning to hold a very poor opinion.

"God save the King—but we can do without him, Maid. You have vexed him by taking his sweetheart, but he will be content when you give him Paris in exchange."

Joan shook her head, quite disconsolate.

"I know I was to win Paris with the King. And now the King is against me, the court is against me, my voices are against me, and it is near the feast of Saint John."

Her last words puzzled Lahire.

"What of that? Every day in the calendar neighbors some saint's day."

Joan spoke low, awe in her voice.

"I will tell you a secret thing. My voices warn me that my time must come before the feast of Saint John. For a dreary while they did not speak at all, left me utterly lonely. But now when they speak it is ever the same story. 'Before the feast of Saint John—before the feast of Saint John.'"

Her words dashed Lahire, for now he believed in

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her voices as he believed in her, and he dreaded the effect of a visible gloom on the army.

"Take heart, Maid," he urged. "Do not let the men see you cast down."

Joan seemed to rally a little at the mere suggestion that any fear of misfortune could cast a cloud upon her brow when she faced her army. She stretched out a hand to Lahire.

"I will smile by-and-by, when we ride," she promised him, "but just now I am sour and lumpish, and mock you with my cross-humors."

Lahire longed to assure her that to be by her side was for him the highest of all earthly privileges and human fortunes, but since their speech in the King's garden he had never spoken a word to her that man might not change with a man, and he feared that if he spoke at all from his heart now he might come near to break his promise. While he hesitated a trumpet sounded in the town. Lahire spoke, responsive to the summons:

"We rally in the square. Come, Maid, let us puff the enemy out of our way and talk of fortune later."

Joan turned to him with something of her old spirit shining in her eyes.

"You are right, friend. Come, I am blithe for fighting."

They descended from the tower and made for the market-square in silence. As they got among the throng of people who were waiting to watch the departure of the troops, Lahire glanced at Joan's face

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and saw that she was smiling and that she wore her old air of confidence. This was for the soldiers, who cheered her as they saw. But Lahire felt in his heart that she wore that brave air as she might wear a mask, that the light in her eyes was not the light of summer, but the frozen brightness of despair.

Half an hour later the gallant little army rode out of the threatened town, a war-worn company of horsemen in armor, with its tail of billmen and bowmen. At the head rode Joan on her white horse, with Lahire beside her on his black steed.

Now as Joan rode out of the town by one gate, Gilles de Laval, accompanied by Nicholas Loyseleur, rode into it by another, and was conducted to Flavy.

"Good-morrow, Messire de Flavy," Gilles said, pleasantly.

Flavy greeted him with much astonishment.

"My Lord of Laval! How do you come to Compiègne?"

"By the King's wish," Gilles answered, sardonically—"on the wind, if you like—with this missive."

He gave Flavy a letter, which Flavy read with evident pain.

"The King," he said, sadly—"God save him—is pleased to place Compiègne in your hands. I only grieve that his Majesty thinks me unfit for my post."

Gilles shook his head.

"Not so. But the King doubts the wisdom of the Maid and wishes her over-generalled."

Flavy sighed.

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"She is very brave."

"Even foolhardy," Gilles added. "Things have gone ill with her of late."

Bidding Flavy take order for his lodgment, Gilles, still accompanied by Loyseleur, climbed to the top of the tower from which, so short a time before, Lahire and Joan had been looking over the meadows.

"Come hither, Master Nicholas," Gilles called. Nicholas joined him. "My gaze is something dim, but you have the sight of a falcon. Tell me what you see down there in the valley."

Gilles seated himself on the edge of the parapet. Loyseleur, shading his eyes, looked over the country.

"I see," said Loyseleur, "the sunlight shining on the army of the Maid. One on a black horse by her side must be Lahire."

"It is Lahire," said Gilles. "Does aught seem stirring in the enemy's camp?"

Loyseleur scanned the distance.

"All seems quiet as sleep."

Gilles chuckled.

"Would you not think the Maid was riding to her easiest victory?"

"Truly," said Loyseleur, "it seems as if she must take them unawares."

Gilles grinned wickedly.

"That seeming sleepy enemy is wide awake, thanks to some friendly warnings. Those seeming empty woods are thick with men. You shall know when they are in the trap by the call of a trumpet."

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"They march on unchallenged," Loyseleur observed, still watching.

At that moment the sound of a trumpet was heard in the distance. Gilles sprang to his feet.

"What happens now, good Nicholas?"

Nicholas strained over the parapet.

"On all sides the Maid's party is assailed. Her banner floats over the fight."

Gilles rubbed his hands.

"Tell me when it falls."

"It sways!" Loyseleur cried; "it bends! No, it is erect again! Around it all her party rally. The enemy reels back."

"You lie!" Gilles raged at him.

"Not so, my lord," Loyseleur protested, "they fail before the Maid."

"Hell's curse on them!" Gilles snarled. "What now?"

"The enemy are reinforced," Loyseleur announced. "Their ranks stiffen."

"Have they taken the Maid?" Gilles asked, fiercely.

Loyseleur shook his head.

"Her banner still flies. Her party fall back, but they fight every inch of the ground they yield and beat their adversaries off. They will make good their retreat to the town."

Gilles looked infernal triumph.

"Will they so? We shall see!"

He sped down the tower steps and fled to the gate, where Flavy was standing, and commanded:

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"Raise the drawbridge, instantly—in the King's name!"

"My lord—" Flavy began to protest.

Gilles interrupted him.

"The Maid's army is cut to pieces."

"But the fugitives—" Flavy urged.

Gilles would not listen to him.

"I must save the town!" he shouted. "The enemy will pour in if we delay. Up with the bridge."

Flavy made a gesture of despair, but he could do no more. The order was given, the drawbridge raised and the portcullis lowered.

All had happened as Loyseleur had described to Lord Gilles of Laval. Joan and her party had ridden into a well-planned trap. Treachery had misled her as to the enemy's strength and as to the enemy's ignorance of her whereabouts. When they came upon the enemy it was plain in a moment that they were greatly, if not hopelessly, outnumbered, and that any chance of inflicting signal injury upon the enemy was out of the question. Joan had come to her last field. Assailed on all sides by foes whose numbers were being continually reinforced, her attack became first a stand, then a retreat, and at last a rout. The only course of safety was to regain the town as fast as might be. Joan was unwilling to leave the field, but there was no help for it. Lahire dragged at her bridle-rein on one side, Pierre and Gérardin guarded her on the other, and they and what was left of their

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company galloped as hotly as they might back on the road to Compiègne.

The English could scarcely believe their good-fortune when they saw the Maid in flight, and did not press the pursuit at first—made, in fact, so much delay as would have enabled without difficulty the fugitives to gain shelter in the town. But the delay of the English was balanced by the forethought of the Lord Gilles of Laval, and the Maid's cause was already lost when she and Lahire and the others came clattering up the causeway to the walls of the town.

"We have won home," Lahire said, and choked as he said it, for he saw, to his horror, that the bridge was up.

"Lower the bridge, in God's name!" he shouted—"lower the bridge!"

Though the walls were crowded with men watching the rout and chase, they did not dare to discharge their weapons for fear of wounding friends. But the bridge remained stubbornly raised.

"Treason!" Lahire cried; and "Treason!" echoed the fugitives.

Joan saw the peril and the only chance of safety.

"Save yourselves. In the open country you may escape."

"Come, then," Pierre cried, and caught at her bridle.

Joan shook him off.

"I stay here," she said, with a wan smile. The pursuit came raving up.

"Rally round the Maid!" Lahire shouted.

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Joan cried:

“For God and France!”

Then the flood of the enemy foamed around them and overpowered them.

Events followed as swiftly as the beating of a noon-day bell. Man after man was cut down or made prisoner by the victorious English. Lahire, Gérardin, and Pierre formed for a while a bulwark to the Maid, but the odds against them were too great. Pierre and Gérardin, whose rich habits seemed to mark them for great lords, were captured alive. Lahire, wounded many times, fell at last beneath a crushing blow from a mace. The last thing that he remembered before he lost consciousness was the lithe figure of the Maid on her great white horse, struggling in the midst of a multitude of fierce faces and grasping fingers. “Yield thy faith to me!” one English giant shouted. Joan cried back at him, defiantly, “I have given my faith to another and not to thee.” Then a dozen hands seized her and dragged her from her horse. That was the end of it.

A little later Lahire recovered consciousness for a while. The dusk was dying down into darkness. All about him on the causeway lay dead and dying, and the muddy earth was stained with blood and sown with broken swords and scraps of armor. Among these tragic trophies of a ruined day, Lahire’s gaze rested upon a fragment of silk—white silk, with gold lilies worked upon it—which he knew well enough must have been torn from Joan’s surcoat in that last

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struggle of that fatal day. It lay on the edge of the causeway where it sloped by a hedged ditch to the meadows. Stiff with his wounds, Lahire crawled slowly on his hands and knees to where that fragment of silk lay, and, seizing it, pressed it to his lips and kissed it passionately. Then, as he tried to rise, his senses reeled again, he staggered, fell, rolled down the causeway into the ditch, and lay there, again unconscious.

XXIX

HOW LAHIRE HEARD VOICES

WHEN Lahire came to his senses he found himself still lying on the field, stiff with his wounds and weak from loss of blood. It was the gray of the morning, and the coldness of the night had done him a good turn by staying the flow of blood and helping to keep him alive, for Lahire wanted very devoutly and religiously to live; and if he had a purpose in life before, he had a far higher purpose now, and that purpose was, somehow or other, as soon as might be, to rescue the Maid from her captivity.

He tried to scramble to his feet, but found the attempt too difficult for the moment, so lay as he was, wondering what would happen next. Presently, as the day lightened, he saw the drawbridge of the town being lowered, heard the creak of the lifted portcullis, and saw a certain number of persons come out of the city, evidently for the purpose of collecting and burying the dead. Where he lay, in that ditch by the side of the causeway, his body was not easily discernible, and, in the hope of gaining aid, he was about to raise his voice in a cry for help, when he thought that he

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recognized in one of two men who were passing near him a familiar form—he was the Lord Gilles of Laval—and, seeing him, Lahire held his peace and kept close, wondering what brought him there. The two men passed so near him that he could hear them when they spoke; and now Gilles of Laval was speaking:

“Master Loyseleur, it may be that there are some friends of the Maid lying here that have not been taken prisoner and are not spent. It would be no uncharitable act, Master Loyseleur, for you to put any such out of their pain.”

Master Loyseleur gave a chuckle which sounded in Lahire’s ears as an exhibition of very untimely mirth, and he heard the Lord of Laval continue:

“Seek well,” he said, “if you can find that pestilent Lahire among the slain. He may be prisoner, but I would sooner have him dead. So search well, Master Loyseleur, and bring me news.”

The speakers passed on; and when they were a good distance off, Lahire made another and more successful attempt to extract himself from the ditch in which he lay. Crawling on his hands and knees, he reached the causeway with difficulty, and, proceeding painfully along it, succeeded at length in gaining the town, where he was warmly welcomed by the soldiers on guard, who had given him up for lost. He had to be carried to the house of Monsieur de Flavy, where his wounds were tended.

As for the Lord Gilles of Laval, as soon as he heard that Lahire had escaped from the slaughter and was

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safely in the town he bade farewell to the governor and journeyed with all possible speed to his master the King, with the news that the Maid had failed—as he always said she would fail—and that it would be wise to think of her no more.

Dom Gregory tells the story of Joan's captivity, as other chroniclers have told it, only with more brevity. In his pages he narrates, or transcribes from Chartier's narration, how John of Luxembourg held the Maid prisoner, and how John of Luxembourg, being an unscrupulous person and desperately in need of money, sold the Maid to her enemies, the English; in which infamous piece of barter both sides were well content with their bargain. John of Luxembourg was glad to hear his gold pieces chink, and the English were glad to have in their power the woman who in so short a while had checked their advance, scattered their armies like dust, and almost uprooted their dominion in France. He tells of the poor girl's wellnigh fatal attempt to escape; he tells of the determination of her captors to bring about her death; he tells of her transfer to Rouen, and of the long days and months of her captivity there; he tells of the preparations for, and the progress of, the infamous trial under the presidency of the infamous Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais.

This Pierre Cauchon, whom Dom Gregory hates with a splendid enthusiasm, ranging him in infamy, good churchman though Gregory was, with that Cyril of Alexandria who slew Hypatia, had his own personal

HOW LAHIRE HEARD VOICES

reasons for disliking Joan. He had ever been a sympathizer with the English faction, and the tide of Joan's triumphs had swept him out of his city, and he had fled for a while to England, and had come back to France with the Cardinal of Winchester, eager for rewards and eager for revenge. Dom Gregory tells how this high churchman, man of much learning and more ambition, delighted in the opportunity now afforded him of pleasing his English patrons and avenging his private grudge. He tells how, owing to the fact that the meadow-land where Joan was captured happened to be within the diocese of Beauvais, Pierre Cauchon was able to claim her as his captive and be the chief instrument in the base bargain which delivered Joan into the hands of merciless enemies. He records the cruelty which kept the girl a prisoner in the hands of the English soldiers, instead of committing her to an ecclesiastical prison and the guardianship of ecclesiastics; he records the savage malignity with which she was persecuted by her jailers, and not by the jailers who were common soldiers alone, but by those jailers who bore some of the noblest names and were proud of some of the noblest blood in England.

In all this Dom Gregory, or his original, differs in nothing from the others who have written on the lamentable story; but in one important point he does differ. All historians have marvelled that no effort to save Joan was made, either by the King she had crowned or by any of those captains who had so often followed her to victory. To Dom Gregory, the indif-

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ference of the King is explained by what he tells of his love for her whom he called Catherine of Laval, and his rage against the Maid who had robbed him. As for the captains, Dom Gregory has his surprise for us, for he tells us how Lahire did strive to effect the rescue of the woman he adored.

XXX

HOW LAHIRE CAME TO ROUEN

WHEN Lahire found that he was unable to arouse, the King from either of his two moods of apathy or anger, and that in either of these two moods the King was heedless of the fate of the Maid, he did not, for all that, lose heart in his purpose. If he could get no help from the King, if he could hope for nothing but positive opposition from the King's advisers, who were rejoiced to have the troubler of things as they were safely under lock and key in the hands of the English, he could at least rely upon himself and on certain of the captains, his friends, and on the gang of Gascon adventurers who had plundered under his command for so long. But if Xaintrailles was always ready to lend him a hand and a sword in a daring enterprise, the men at Xaintrailles' command were no more numerous than those that followed the free-lance of Lahire; and though the two together made up a very respectable company for the purposes of pillage or for stiffening the strength of an army, they could not hope to effect any serious attack upon so large a town as Rouen, so strongly garrisoned by the English.

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Lahire spent anxious days planning plans, each of which, as it simmered in his eager mind, seemed excellent for a while, only to be found thereafter impracticable and to be dismissed with a sigh. At last he decided that the wisest course of action would be to get into Rouen himself, so as to study the problem in the very spot where it must needs be solved. He would have, of course, to get into the city in disguise, for though his face was not familiar to many of the English captains, who of late had been more busy in running away from than regarding French soldiers, there was always the chance that some one of the many partisans of the Duke of Burgundy in the town might recognize him.

Being a man of war, Lahire decided that his fittest disguise would be that of a man of peace. Here his early training stood him in good stead. The hand that wielded a sword so well could drive a pen as skilfully. It was but darkening his face with walnut-juice, letting a fringe of beard straggle on his chin, changing his armor for a civic suit of black, pulling a layman's hood over his ears, and there was Lahire, a soldier of fortune, comfortably transformed into a respectable workaday clerk. So it came about that Lahire, the soldier of fortune, disappeared from court and camp, and his comrades knew him no more, while at the same time the population of Rouen city was augmented by the appearance within its walls of a respectable scrivener, Jean Audran by name, who took up his abode at "The Yellow Pig," near the

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market-place, and professed himself anxious to obtain employment.

Rouen was very full of folk—there were more soldiers than citizens. The leopards of England and the red crosses of Burgundy were everywhere. English soldiers sprawled in the streets and brawled in the taverns, and were eyed with fear and hatred by the citizens, who were forced to keep their fear and their hatred concealed and to pretend a loyalty to the English King and to his regent, the Duke of Bedford. But if the colored coats of soldiers were among the most conspicuous features of the place, the black clothes of ecclesiastics and lawyers were scarcely less obvious. The great trial had brought to the town any number of churchmen and men of the robe, each with their attendant train of clerics and secretaries, who buzzed about the castle or patrolled the quieter streets when the trial was not forward, discussing with much animation the various problems that the case presented.

Among this motley populace of soldiers, priests, and lawyers Lahire moved discreetly, quietly, all eyes, all ears. He wanted to learn all there was to learn of Joan's case and Joan's peril. He wanted to be present at the trial. He wanted to find some means of communicating with the prisoner and bidding her be of cheer, and, as we said, he professed to want employment. Employment came to him by way of a pretty girl. The landlord of "The Yellow Pig" had a daughter, Madelon, whose eyes of blue and curls of saffron-color would but a little while ago have proved

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attractive enough to Lahire to tempt him to open a campaign with a compliment. Lahire was now indifferent to eyes and curls of any color, save only the sad eyes and the dark hair of the Maid. But it chanced one day that Lahire met the girl in company with a spruce young clerk.

Madelon afterwards told Lahire, when she served him at supper, that this same clerk was in the employ of Master Guillaume Manchon, the notary who was acting as chief clerk for the trial. She told him that the youth's name was Lorinet. She admitted that he adored her, pretended she was indifferent to him, but regretted none the less that he was just then kept so busy that she had little of his company. Why was he so busy? Lahire questioned, and was told that not only had Lorinet to be at the castle all day while the trial was going on, but that also he had much writing to do for Master Manchon in the evenings, because the pressure of the trial was putting all other work into arrears. Incidentally she said that it was almost impossible to get any help in such work, as every hand that could use a pen was busy and a writer of any kind at a premium.

Here was Lahire's opportunity. He told the girl that he himself could write an indifferent hand. To prove her this he wrote her name and her lover's on a piece of paper in half a dozen different characters, and so entwined and interlaced with curves and flourishes and spirals and other fancies of calligraphy as it was a wonder to behold. The delighted girl kept

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the paper, showed it to Master Lorinet, and later brought her lover and the guest of "The Yellow Pig" together. Over a flagon that Lahire paid for, the real clerk and the sham clerk made friends. Lahire showed Lorinet some further specimens of his skill, which Lorinet was pleased to applaud critically and to envy furiously; and then the pair fell to talking.

As a result of the talking, Lorinet agreed to present his new friend to Master Manchon on the secret understanding that the new friend was to pay Master Lorinet a generous commission on whatever Master Manchon might accord him. Lahire was well content with the arrangement, though he pretended to haggle for the sake of appearances and only to yield when Lorinet pointed out that without his patronage he would not be able to get to Master Manchon at all. These terms once agreed upon, Lorinet lost no time in bringing his new friend to his old master, and Manchon, after being afforded proofs of Lahire's skill with the pen, very readily enlisted him as a new recruit to his little staff of scribes.

Now again Lahire blessed that early weakness which had led him so far upon the path to the priesthood as to equip him with such command of writing and command of Latin as made him a serviceable person in the eyes of a Rouen clerk. For now he had gained one great step in his plans: he was able to be present daily at the trial, where he stood behind his master's chair in readiness to render the notary any service that he might demand.

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It was with a strange sense of satisfaction and with a strange ache at the heart that Lahire found himself in the great, gloomy, panelled hall of the castle of Rouen, and an actual actor, though seemingly an insignificant one, in the tragedy that was being played there. All around the room there ran two rows of seats, the second row raised higher than the first; and, though these seats were numerous, they were not enough to afford rest to the throng of monks and priests and doctors who formed Joan's jury. A higher seat at the end of the hall, surrounded by a shield carrying the arms of England, was reserved for the president of that evil tribunal, Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais.

Lahire had once seen the bishop before, hurriedly, in the street, but now, from where he stood behind the table at the other end of the hall, directly facing the bishop's seat, he could study his enemy at leisure. The evil, bloated face, the cruel mouth, the malign eyes, the low forehead, stamped themselves on Lahire's mind and haunted him in his dreams. He would have given much, he would have given everything in the world except his chance of saving Joan, to have had a word in private in a lonely wood with the Lord Bishop of Beauvais. He filled in tedious time with picturing to himself the pageant of his desires, the astonishment of the beast bishop when he found who was facing him in that lonely glade, his expression as Lahire's hands closed about his throat and squeezed his evil life out. Lahire saw himself rolling

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the swollen body into a ditch and leaving it there. And all the while Cauchon, talking with this man and whispering with that, and spinning persistently his wicked web, had little thought that there was one in that assembly thinking such thoughts, and capable, if chance came, of doing such deeds.

The course of that trial is known to the whole world. Dom Gregory tells it no better than another—worse than some; for, after all, he did not, and, indeed, could not, know much about it. The world knows, and weeps in its knowledge, how the unhappy girl was tortured, badgered, bullied, through long hours and days of the most stupid and the most cruel trial on record. The one redeeming thing in all that vile business is the figure of the prisoner, of the girl herself, showing a brave front in the midst of infamous humiliations—using a clear mind to guide her through the tortuous intricacies of the snares that treacherous legality and perverted ingenuity could devise for her, and loyal, in despite of all perils, to her belief in her mission, to her faith in her voices, to her duty to her King.

Again and again her judges tried to trap her into some statement which might be used to brand the King with the stigma of heresy. Again and again her judges tried to inveigle her into some admission, some confession, which could be warped or twisted into an avowal, or at least into a supposition, of the possibility that her voices were wicked voices, speaking with the tongues, not of angels, but of fiends. All these in-

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genious devices failed completely and ignobly. Joan was only one girl against a hundred men, but she kept those men in check as well in that narrow field of contending wits as she had kept their armed allies in check upon the field of battle.

The days came and the days went—long and interminable days they seemed to Lahire—and still the trial dragged on, now in one form of inquiry, now in another, and still the girl faced her daily torment with the same undaunted mien. It was agony to Lahire to see the physical change in the girl, while he applauded her unchanged spirit. Her face was deadly pale, her eyes over-bright, her body seemed wrung and withered with privation; it was a marvel that she lived—Lahire could have thought it pity that she lived but for his still firm conviction that with himself in the city and his good Gascons outside, some chance would yet arise, something yet be done, which would set the Maid at liberty.

Joan herself knew nothing of the presence of Lahire in Rouen. He had found no means of sending news to her, or, rather, he had found that it would be impossible to send any news to her, so she was denied that source of cheer. But she had another source of cheer, and that a most unhappy one. She believed she had found a friend in a certain monk who had lately come to Rouen, a monk who called himself Brother Nicholas Loyseleur, and who professed, to Joan's great joy, to come from her part of the country. She called him her countryman, she trusted him

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wholly, to her own undoing; and Master Nicholas Loyseleur served the Lord of Laval with unscrupulous fidelity, always advising the Maid with advice which, when she followed it, as she mostly did, she followed it to her hurt.

XXXI

HOW LAHIRE MET BROTHER LOYSELEUR

“THIS, too, will end.” The saying of the Eastern prince, in the face of long-abiding peril, fitted itself to the trial of Joan, endless though it had seemed. There came a last day but one of the trial, and then a last day of the trial. Lahire had not been able to learn much definitely about the condition of the Maid in her prison. He heard vague talk, wild rumors, that made his blood burn; but the Maid’s immediate guardians were English, and Lahire knew no English and few of the English soldiers knew French, and there was little to be gained by trying to make friends with any of them. He did not know of her unhappy friendship with Master Nicholas Loyseleur; he would not have known Loyseleur if he had met him in the street; Loyseleur was Gilles’s man, and, though he had served for a while as penman to Alain Chartier, Lahire had never noticed him. He had to content himself for his knowledge of the Maid’s condition with the gossip of the town and with what Madelon told him that Lorinet told her. Of Lorinet himself he saw little. When that young man was not

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compelled to be at work he was always at play, and play for him just then meant the companionship of Madelon, while Lahire, on account of his penmanship, was kept busy by Master Manchon by night as well as by day.

So it came about that when the last morning of the trial dawned Lahire found himself alone in the great hall of the castle of Rouen, making ready the long table, with its green cloth, for the coming of Master Manchon and the other scribes and secretaries, by placing upon it, at appropriate spaces, the writing materials that they employed. It was Lahire's duty, as the youngest in rank of Master Manchon's scribes, to perform these tasks. He mused to himself, in the solitude of the great hall, upon the little he had accomplished so far, and the little time now left to him in which to accomplish anything. Soon those rows of seats about him would be filled for the last time by those evil judges; soon that empty throne, over which the arms of England glowed, would be occupied by the unjust judge whom Lahire hated more than all men in the world save one.

Whatever others thought, Lahire had little doubt in his mind that that tribunal was resolved to bring the Maid to her death, and it was his resolve to defeat their purpose, though even yet he did not know how the thing was to be done. As he meditated this, his lips began unconsciously to murmur the tag of his old song:

“Love has filled my heart to the brim,
Take my heart in your fingers, dearie.”

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And as he murmured these words and his mind went back to the oak wood by Domremy and the Fairies' Tree, the great door of the hall opened and young Lorinet came in. He was as spruce and dapper a dandy as it was possible for a man of the pen to be; he carried a red rose stuck behind his ear, and he wore a countenance of exceeding discontent as he advanced towards the green table and sulkily dumped his armload of parchments upon it.

Lahire greeted him.

"Good-morning."

"First, as usual," Lorinet grunted. "Do you plot for my place with Master Manchon?"

Lahire duffed the doubt aside.

"Not I; I am a bird of passage. But I like the work."

Lorinet looked plaintive.

"I hate to stick in this pitch when the sun shines on the river and one's sweetheart mopes for an airing."

"Pretty girl, your Madelon," Lahire said, thoughtfully. "Why do you stay if she waits? Get some one to take your place for the day."

Lorinet frowned impatiently.

"Every pen in Rouen is employed. Besides, Brother Loyseleur has a job for me."

Lahire was suddenly interested.

"Brother Loyseleur, the Maid's friend?"

Lorinet sniggered at his speech.

"As much a friend as this French lord who comes

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here in secret to plead for the Maid on behalf of King Charles."

Lahire pricked his ears.

"What lord?" he asked.

"Why," said Lorinet, "the Lord Gilles of Laval. He is the guest of the Bishop of Beauvais. I think he is no friend to the Maid, for all his errand."

"Maybe not," Lahire mused, pinching his chin.

Lorinet sighed compassionately.

"The poor witch believes in Brother Loyseleur. Every day of this long trial he has been with her, and tells her what to say, and for the most part she follows his counsel, to her ill-luck."

Lahire was still pensive. He was putting unknown Loyseleur and known Gilles de Laval together, and making four of them.

"What does he want of you?"

Lorinet explained.

"Some words he wants written into my record of the day's doings."

"With what aim?" Lahire questioned.

Lorinet looked grave, which suited ill with his jolly young face.

"Some harm to the girl, I fear."

"You fear!" Lahire cried. "I thought you called her a witch. Are you sorry for her?"

"Yea," said Lorinet, "I am so, and I am sick of the English tyranny. I am a Frenchman that hates to see French priests harry a French maid to please English masters."

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"Then why harm her?" asked Lahire.

Lorinet answered, aptly:

"Brother Loyseleur promises fifty crowns if I do his will."

Lahire nodded sagely.

"And you could buy Madelon many things with fifty crowns. Ah, if I had so pretty a sweetheart I should be jealous of her."

Lorinet puffed his cheeks.

"Madelon thinks of no one but me."

"Of course not," Lahire agreed. After a pause, he added:

"What a fine-looking fellow her brother is!"

Lorinet looked at him in surprise.

"Madelon has no brother."

Lahire seemed puzzled.

"Not a swaggering soldier brother, with a rolling eye? Perhaps a cousin, then?"

"Madelon has no cousin," Lorinet yapped. "What are you talking about?"

Lahire assumed an apologetic air.

"Have I been indiscreet? I fancied, on my way here, I saw her chatting with such a valiant. But I was no doubt mistaken in the girl."

Lorinet was piqued.

"You could not mistake my Madelon."

Lahire agreed with him.

"I should have thought not; but if, as you say, she has no soldier brother nor no soldier cousin—let's say no more about it."

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Lorinet was not to be so put off.

"We must say more about it. The minx! the imp! To think that I am tied here all day while she—"

He broke off in a paroxysm of powerless rage. Lahire came to his aid with an offer.

"Could I help you? I write a clerkly hand. I'll fill your place and tell Master Manchon you were taken ill of a sudden."

"Will you?" cried Lorinet, eagerly. Then he reflected. "But there is Brother Loyseleur."

Lahire waved away the objection.

"He won't care who does his job, so long as the job is done."

Lorinet looked monstrous wise.

"But I shall care who gets the fifty crowns," he asserted.

Lahire laughed in his face.

"Dear lad, I don't want them. Have holiday, crowns, and all, for pretty Madelon's sake. But, of course, if you don't want to go—la, la, la," and he started whistling the air of his song.

Lorinet was torn between desire and doubt.

"Of course I want," he wailed; then asked, cunningly:

"Are you trying to sneak into my shoes?"

Lahire drolled him.

"Lord, man, I tell you I am making for Paris." He softly lilted the words,

"Love has filled my heart to the brim,"

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and then said, as if communing with himself, "What do girls see in soldiers?"

The meditative question pricked Lorinet like a thistle, pricked him to resolution.

"I'll do it," he said. "Tell Brother Loyseleur I sent you; tell Master Manchon I am ill. But you'll give me the fifty crowns?"

"Good lad, I said so," Lahire answered him, coolly. "My gain is to stretch at ease in your seat, instead of standing behind Manchon's chair all day. But it's just as you please." And he hummed another line of his song:

"Take my heart in your fingers, dearie."

"I do please," Lorinet cried, eagerly. "Farewell; Brother Loyseleur will be here at any moment."

"You may run against him, or Master Manchon?" Lahire suggested.

Lorinet winked and looked knowing.

"Trust me," he said. "I go this way."

Taking Lahire by the arm, he led him to where a little side door shunned observation in the panelling of the wall.

"Through this door I descend to a lonely place beside the river. I shall meet no one."

Lahire patted him on the back.

"My respects to Madelon," he said; and Lorinet vanished.

Lahire went slowly back to the table, musing as he went.

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“Let us hope that pretty Madelon will be pleased to see him,” he murmured, with a faint smile. He had not, in very truth, seen the girl in speech with any soldier; he had conjured up that interview as a means of playing upon popinjay Lorinet’s feelings and getting him out of the way. Why did he want to get him out of the way? Because, in the first place, he wanted to know what was the mysterious piece of penmanship which Brother Loyseleur wanted done so covertly. If, indeed, it meant harm to the Maid, then it were well it should come to one who might turn it into good, for Lahire knew well enough that, though young Lorinet was a decent fellow enough, there were very few things he would not do or people he would not sacrifice for the sake of fifty crowns, to spend on winsome, impish, fickle, tricky Madelon.

Lahire seated himself at the table and meditated, drumming on the green cloth with his fingers. In his heart he was asking, eagerly, “Joan, Joan, is there a chance at last?” and the thought that there might be such a chance renewed the hope that had been long deferred.

At this moment the door of the great hall opened again and a man entered the apartment—a man in a monk’s habit, a man with a sallow face and shifty eyes and a mean mouth. Lahire had seen him often during the course of the trial, had noted that he acted as if friendly to the Maid, but had doubted the sincerity of his friendship from the show of his villainous face. But he had leaped at the chance Lorinet had

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offered him of meeting this Loyseleur, believing, he scarce knew why, that in such a meeting might lie his chance of reaching to the Maid.

Nicholas Loyseleur came briskly towards the table, assuming that the clerkly figure seated there was the figure of the pliable Lorinet. But when Lahire's larger bulk and shabbier clothes made themselves evident, as Master Manchon's youngest servant in age of office rose to greet him, he saw that he was mistaken, and recoiled with an expression of disappointment. He did not recognize Lahire. The stained face, the unusual fringe of beard, veiled, as they were, by the clerk's hood he had pulled about his ears, made the disguise effectual. But Loyseleur had expected to find Lorinet and to find Lorinet alone, and he found some one else in his place, and was vexed thereat.

"Brother Loyseleur," said Lahire, civilly, "Master Lorinet is taken ill of a sudden and sends me his deputy."

"Who are you?" Loyseleur asked, cautiously.

Lahire lied glibly.

"I am Jean Audran, scrivener to Master Manchon. Lorinet told me you needed such an one."

Loyseleur looked on him sourly.

"I need a trustworthy fellow to do as bid and ask no questions. Master Manchon has scruples: useless to me. Clerk Lorinet lacks scruples: useful to me. And you?"

Lahire bowed obsequiously.

"Lorinet has scotched my scruples, if I ever had

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any, with share of what you pay. Say your will and count it well done."

Loyseleur came close to him.

"You are no friend to the Maid?"

Lahire affected astonishment.

"I, a Burgundian of Burgundians?" he asked.

"You speak like a Gascon," Loyseleur said, critically.

Lahire was slightly disconcerted, but he was ready with a reply.

"My mother came from Gascony. It does not affect my penmanship."

Loyseleur accepted his explanation.

"I want you to set down what I have traced on this paper so that it shall seem to form part of the minutes of the court."

Loyseleur drew from his robe a paper which he handed to Lahire, who read it rapidly over.

"Here," Lahire said, "you make the Maid affirm the inspiration of Satan and confirm her recantation. What recantation?" he added, in surprise.

Loyseleur answered, sharply:

"Did you not see her sign a paper yesterday—after she promised to wear woman's dress?"

"Yea," said Lahire, "and understood from Master Manchon that it was her appeal to the court of Rome."

Loyseleur grinned wolfishly.

"So the girl thought when she made her mark on the parchment, but the sheet she signed was but the last of many containing the full confession of her sins. It was my idea."

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He smiled fatuously.

"You deserve to be rewarded for it," Lahire said, thoughtfully.

"For greater surety," Loyseleur continued, "we wish it repeated at the end of the examination to-day in the copy of the minutes which Master Manchon gives the bishop for transmission to Rome. You understand?"

Lahire nodded.

"Perfectly. I suppose you have frequent access to the prisoner?"

"At all times. I carry an order from the Earl of Warwick. When the session is over I will come here for your work."

"I will satisfy you, never fear," Lahire promised.

Loyseleur, listening to distant sounds, broke off the conference.

"Enough. The sitting begins."

XXXII

HOW JOAN'S TRIAL CAME TO AN END

THE ferret-faced rascal turned away, confident that he had done a neat piece of work, and went to the back of the hall to the place where he habitually sat. Lahire could scarcely believe his good-fortune. Chance, at the last moment, had flung in his way a means for attaining to the Maid and at the same time had served to unmask a scoundrel. He thrust the paper Loyseleur had given him into the breast of his gown and took his stand at the table behind the chair that was to be occupied by Master Manchon. The noise of advancing feet that had scared the sham monk from his side increased.

Presently the great door opened and a number of English soldiers entered and formed a guard at either side of the portal. Then the man Lahire hated most of all men on earth save one, Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, entered the hall, an ugly bulk of cruel flesh, and with him, smiling into his fat, evil face, was the man whom Lahire hated more than all men on earth, the Lord Gilles of Laval.

The Lord Gilles of Laval had come to Rouen under

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safe-conduct from the Duke of Burgundy, ostensibly as a plenipotentiary from the King of France, to serve, in whatever way they might be served, the interests of the Maid. There had come a voice from the cloister to Charles, the voice of a dying woman, whom while she was of the earth he had loved as Catherine of Laval. The dying woman conjured him to do all that it was in his power to do for the captive Maid. In obedience to that summons, Charles had pitched upon Gilles, as the brother of his dying lover, to be his ambassador, and Gilles journeyed to Rouen in sinister acquiescence. So much, indeed, Lahire did not then know, but the sum of that knowledge he guessed from the presence of Gilles in that place on that day.

At the heels of this pair of knaves came the black troop of ecclesiastics and doctors of the law that made up the company of Joan's judges, and these fluttered to their places along the walls and stood waiting before them until such time as it should please the lord bishop to take his seat yonder beneath the shield that bore the arms of England. After this covey had flown to nest, came in the lesser fry, the scribes and secretaries, with Master Manchon at their head, and these, seeing how the lord bishop lingered in the centre of the hall with the French lord from Chinon, kept together in a little rabble near the door among the soldiery until such time as it might please his lordship to break off in his talk and assume the presidency of the tribunal.

Cauchon, however, seemed in no hurry to break off

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his talk with Gilles de Laval. The pair had drifted together into the neighborhood of the green-covered table at which Lahire stood with bent head, pretending to be very busy in the placing of pens. They were so near now and so heedless of him that he could hear the very words they spoke. The earliest words he could catch were trivial words, belated fragments of such idle talk as they had changed together over the repast they had shared and which they had just quitted. The Lord Gilles had evidently come with the lord bishop to give a glance at the place where the famous trial had been held, for he was looking about him curiously while he conversed with the bishop, as one who understood and appreciated the heavy harmonies of the room. Suddenly he saluted the bishop and made to go, and as he did so Lahire heard him say, a thought querulously:

"My lord bishop, is there to be no end to this trial?"

"It should have ended long ago," Cauchon admitted, "but the girl is a cunning vixen. Press her on some damning point and she eludes it nimbly or retorts with such seeming simplicity that interrogation staggers."

"Inspiration of angels," Gilles observed, mockingly.

"Inspiration of Satan!" Cauchon snarled. "But I think we have snared her now. She has broken the promise we wrung from her to wear women's clothes. She has relapsed. Your King will not save her."

Gilles protested unctuously.

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"I am sure my King would not wish to save her if she be found guilty by this honorable court. You understand that."

"I understand you. Bless you, my son," Cauchon answered, with a wicked smile.

He extended his hand. Gilles knelt and kissed the bishop's ring, then rose and left the hall. Cauchon went slowly to his seat. As soon as he was seated, all the others who had been standing seated themselves.

"Bring the woman before us," Cauchon gave order, in a cold voice.

An officer at the door saluted the bishop and left the hall. Cauchon leaned a little forward and talked to the churchman nearest to him on his right.

Lahire turned to Manchon, who was seated at the table above him and who had not yet noticed the substitution of personalities.

"Master Manchon," he said, in a low voice, "Clerk Lorinet is of a sudden grievously ill, and has begged me to take his place."

Manchon turned to him impatiently.

"Very well, Jean Audran, very well. You write a good hand." And so dismissed the matter from his mind.

Indeed, Master Manchon was not happy in this business of the trial and wished it were well over. He had his grave doubts, being a scrupulous legal person, as to the way in which the trial was being conducted, and his still graver doubts, being a quite human person with a human heart, as to the alleged guilt of Joan.

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Queer overtures had been made to him as to the manipulation of documents, manipulation which, as it seemed to him, amounted to no less than falsification of evidence. He had shown such a stubborn resentment at the mildest of these designs that those who fostered them abstained from plying him further, regarding him as an honest ass and wholly useless. But Master Manchon was uneasy in his mind, even miserable, and had not time to waste over the illness of one clerk and the taking of his place by another.

Lahire bent over his papers and pretended to begin writing. There were always things to be written, overdue from the last day's business. There was nothing suspicious in a clerk writing busily while the business of the court was toward. It was not Lorinet's business, and in consequence it was not Lahire's business, to keep the minutes of the day. He drew from his breast Loyseleur's paper, and, keeping it concealed under his left sleeve, proceeded to make a copy thereof, with such emendations as seemed good to him. He had not set down many words when the great door opened yet again, and Joan came into the place of trial.

Lahire's heart beat furiously. Day after day for many days he had seen her so, in her man's habit of sullen black, with the steel band about her waist to which the chains were fastened that kept her fettered when she was in her dungeon. Day after day for many days he had bled inwardly at the sight of her haggard face, her sad, tired eyes, her bloodless cheeks

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and livid lips, her hair that had lost its rich warmth of darkness, her shrunken body. Every day of all those days the piteous sight came like a new stab to him, and to-day the tragedy of her ruin seemed more tragic than ever. But he kept bidding himself be of hope because there was a chance, and as he did so he watched as ever, with admiration, the bravery of the girl's bearing and the courage in her eyes. Joan advanced into the middle of the room and faced her enemies and her chief enemy, who sat on the high seat with the arms of England over his wicked head.

Cauchon leaned forward with a sinister suavity.

"Joan, my very dear friend, what is this we hear, that you have relapsed into sin? You promised to wear woman's dress henceforward."

Joan answered him firmly.

"I promised to wear woman's dress if you placed me where I should be treated as a woman, tended by a woman. But while you leave me in the care of English soldiers I must, for the sake of my womanhood, keep to my man's habit."

Cauchon wagged his head.

"I cannot believe the soldiers treat you ill. My Lord of Warwick tells me he has enjoined them to be forbearing with you."

"My Lord of Warwick is not with them day and night, as I am," Joan replied. "I must do as I think right."

Cauchon frowned.

"This is bad. But there is worse. It comes to our

HOW JOAN'S TRIAL CAME TO AN END

knowledge that you still say you hear the voices of saints."

Joan clasped her hands.

"I thank Heaven I have heard them again."

"Why, you bold sinner!" cried Cauchon, holding out some papers that he plucked from his breast, "here is your signed confession that these voices are of the Evil One."

Joan repudiated his charge instantly.

"I signed no such confession. I cannot write nor read. I was advised to make my mark on a paper. I was very sick in body and scarcely knew what I was doing. I thought it was my appeal to our Holy Father the Pope. I signed one piece of paper, but you hold there many pieces. My appeal would not be so long."

Cauchon looked in the direction of Loyseleur.

"Speak, Brother Loyseleur," he commanded.

Loyseleur rose.

"I thought," he explained, in a false, fawning voice, "the prisoner knew what she was signing and in that belief helped her to make her mark. I acted for the advantage of her soul and body."

Cauchon gave him a look of approval.

"Your zeal needs no praise."

He returned to Joan.

"Woman, I summon you to confess anew that you have sinned in wearing a dissolute habit, in bearing arms in great presumption against our sovereign lord, King Henry of England and France, and in idolatrously invoking evil spirits and adoring them."

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Joan spoke clearly and fearlessly.

“King Charles is my King and Heaven my inspiration. I submit my words and deeds to God, who caused me to do what I have done. And I appeal from this unjust tribunal to our Holy Father the Pope.”

Cauchon beat his fist upon the arm of his chair.

“You froward creature, you shall answer more fitly. Summon the Doers of High Deeds.”

Evidently all was prepared beforehand to give effect to Cauchon's words, for, as he ended, the great door opened and two executioners clad in black and masked entered and stood waiting, a little way from Joan. Joan's face did not change at their coming, but a murmur ran round the court. Lahire leaned back in his chair and gripped the table hard with his hands.

Cauchon pointed grimly towards the new-comers.

“These men are ready to put you to the torture, to bring you back into the way and knowledge of the truth.”

Joan answered, unmoved by the new peril:

“If you tear me limb from limb, and separate soul from body, I will tell you nothing more, and if I were to say anything else I should always afterwards declare that you made me say it by force.”

There were many murmurs in the court. Various churchmen left their seats to confer with the bishop and with one another. Lahire pushed his chair free of the table and fingered a dagger underneath his gown. He was ready, if the bishop's threat were to

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be carried out, to interfere with the proceedings of the court with astonishing abruptness. Joan should not be tortured—he was resolved of that even if he should have to kill her with his own hands to save her. He counted that he would still have time, with a court taken unaware, to drive his dagger into Cauchon's black heart before turning it upon himself. But it was soon patent that Cauchon's proposal did not meet with the general approval of the court. Men urged that the girl's fate was sealed, and that there was no need of further cruelty. Presently Cauchon spoke again, sourly, with the air of one deprived of a satisfaction.

“From the hardness of your heart we fear that torture would profit you little. Let the men go.”

When the executioners had gone out he said, savagely, to Joan:

“Woman, you are cutting yourself off from mercy.”

Joan replied, firmly:

“What I have always said in this trial I will still say. If I were doomed, if I saw the fire lighted, the fagots ready, and the executioner about to light the fire, I would maintain to the death my appeal from this tribunal to the court of Rome.”

Cauchon looked at her evilly.

“Have you anything more to say?” he asked, and Joan answered, quietly:

“No.”

Cauchon raised himself a little in his seat, resting his hands upon the arms of his chair.

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"Then we declare the trial ended, and we summon you to-morrow to hear the sentence which shall be pronounced by us."

Joan looked at him steadfastly and said, in a loud voice:

"Bishop, bishop, in a little while you will have to justify your sentence before the throne of God."

Cauchon waved his hand impatiently.

"Take her away."

In another moment the pathetic little figure in black had vanished from the hall, and the court began to break up. Ecclesiastics and lawyers went out in twos and threes, deep in talk of that day's business and the morrow's work. Manchon collected his papers and went his way with the other secretaries, without a word to Lahire. Manchon was more ill at ease than ever, and afraid to speak to any one lest he might speak his mind and risk his life.

Cauchon, talking with a couple of clerics, left his seat. As he passed out of the hall he encountered the Lord Gilles of Laval, who had come for news of the day's doings.

"Well, my lord bishop?" interrogated Gilles when he saw Cauchon.

Cauchon answered, with a malign smile:

"Be of good cheer. It is done and well done."

And so they went away, their heads close together.

In a little while the hall was empty, save for Lahire, who remained at the table lost in thought. There was silence for a while in the lately crowded hall. Then

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Loyseleur returned cautiously and went slowly towards Lahire, who raised his head and rose to meet him.

"Is your work done?" Loyseleur asked, in a low voice.

Lahire handed him the paper on which he had been busy.

"Here is your minute. It takes the place of the Maid's denial of her confession."

Loyseleur, glancing at the parchment, read part of it in a mumbling voice:

"Here, on being pressed by the bishop, the prisoner, Joan, began to weep and confess that she was in league with the Evil One."

He paused in his reading.

"Yours is a good hand," he said, approvingly, to Lahire, as he rolled up the parchment.

"I hope to better it," Lahire said, with a double meaning where Loyseleur only read one.

Loyseleur produced a plump purse from under his gown and offered it to Lahire.

"Here are your fifty crowns."

Lahire promptly pocketed the money. Honest Lorinet had a right to the wages of sin, and should have them.

"It is well they did not torture the Maid," he said, quietly, as if on an after-thought.

Loyseleur, about to go, paused and looked at him.

"How so?" he asked, dourly.

"Why," said Lahire, cheerfully, "I heard there was one in the hall so friendly to the Maid that if they had

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tried it he would have slain the Maid and the bishop and himself before the court had time to know what had happened."

Loyseleur grinned complacently.

"A vain tale," he sniggered. "The Maid has no friend."

Lahire made him a respectful reverence.

"Except yourself, brother."

Loyseleur tittered. He savored the humor of the saying.

"Good! Except myself."

He was again about to go, and again Lahire stayed him.

"Yet, brother, suppose there had been a friend of the Maid here?"

Loyseleur was incredulous.

"How could he have gained admittance?"

Lahire persisted in his whim.

"Suppose, for the sake of argument, that such a friend had entered the service of some person employed about the court and in that capacity had attended the trial daily, watching his opportunity."

Loyseleur was suddenly startled out of his incredulity and glared at the scribe suspiciously.

"Do you know of such an one?" he asked, angrily.

Lahire nodded.

"I think so. And for your warning I have traced his name at the end of that paper."

Loyseleur hurriedly plucked out the parchment

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from his gown and turned its pages. There, to his consternation, he saw these words, reading them aloud in his alarm.

“All this is a lying tale of Nicholas Loyseleur, copied by—”

Lahire filled in the name before he could speak it.

“‘Lahire.’”

Loyseleur reeled and gasped, for Lahire had pushed back his hood and thrust his head at him; and, despite the walnut-stains and despite the fringe of beard, Loyseleur's guilty spirit knew the face of the great captain, and guessed that he was doomed.

“Lahire!” he gasped, and was about to cry out, when Lahire grasped him by the throat with his right hand.

“Not a squeak, rat,” Lahire whispered. “Yonder little door leads to the river. You will swim to-night.”

As he spoke Loyseleur drew a concealed dagger and stabbed at Lahire; but Lahire expected some such attack, caught his enemy's wrist with his left hand, and twisted it till he dropped the dagger to the ground, with a wail of pain and rage.

“Ah, foolish, foolish,” Lahire said, blandly. “We will spill no blood in this clean court of justice. Go, beast, to wait for your master at the gate of hell. I go to the Maid.”

His strong hand closing tightly on the villain's throat, Lahire squeezed and squeezed and squeezed. It was an ugly business, but it did not take long in the

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doing. In a few minutes Loyseleur's body hung limp and hideous from Lahire's grip. When the soldier was quite sure the rogue was dead, he dragged his limp body to the little door in the panelling, through which he disappeared with his victim.

XXXIII

HOW JOAN LAY IN PRISON

THE cell in which Joan was confined was as gloomy and miserable as any in the castle. It was a low, vaulted place, much of whose space was occupied by pillars that served for support to superior parts of the building. In the corner stood a wretched pallet of wood, and on this pallet Joan passed her nights, and such part of her days as was not given to her inquisition. Though this cell was in the heart of the castle, and though it was always occupied, day and night, by a number of English soldiers, the poor girl was, nevertheless, chained to this wretched bed as heavily as if her captors believed that she could, with the strength of her single arm, overcome half a dozen strong Englishmen and fight her way from a fortress.

It was reported in the town, and readily believed by many, that Joan was kept in the castle fastened in an iron cage, like a wild beast. This, it seems, was not true. But if Joan had, indeed, been a wild beast, and dangerous, she could scarcely have been treated with more callous and merciless brutality. The common soldiers of that day were rough, fighting fellows

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enough, not over-squeamish in their treatment of women, and few of their kind, French or English, would have deemed it necessary or even sensible to be over-scrupulous in the treatment of a prisoner, man or woman. But the English soldiers to whose ceaseless guardianship Joan was given were, it is to be hoped, savage even of their kind, for their cruelty to their captive is an ugly story.

Truly they hated the girl, for they knew her to have been the cause of such staggering defeats as English armies had not endured for many a long day. Truly, also, they feared the girl, for the belief in witchcraft was very general in those days, and no such soldier was exempt from it, and the men who wardered Joan were heartily convinced that she was a witch, a worker in magic, and a servant of the devil. As enemy, then, and as sorceress they detested her, and, having her in their power, they avenged themselves for the relief of Orleans, for so many lost battles and captured captains, by making her life a very misery. She was the victim of every shame, every humiliation, every pain that it was in their power to inflict upon a girl weak with sickness, helpless, friendless, bound with heavy chains.

The blame for this cruel conduct rests not alone upon the ruffian soldiers, it has to be shared by the great lords who stood for England's King and England's dominion in France. The Lord of Warwick, the Lord of Stafford, even the Duke of Bedford himself, regent for the infant King, countenanced and con-

HOW JOAN LAY IN PRISON

done, if they did not command, the atrocious acts. The catalogue of Joan's agonies is heavy reading, much of it too heavy and too terrible to retell. Joan, it is true, was a peasant girl, and so not unfamiliar with the rough ways, rough speech, and rough usage of a rough age; but she was natively of a sensitive delicacy and purity which her deep spirituality had clarified and intensified to a degree that made her more lamentably a victim to outrage and insult. Then again, she had been hurled from the high place to which her destiny had lifted her, and the horror of her fall was the more patent from the greatness she had attained. She had often prayed that when the captivity to which she knew herself doomed came it might be brief, but now her prison time had been long and evil beyond her fears.

One little solace alone she had in her sorrows: she had no English and her brutal jailers had no French; so, at least, while she knew from their leering faces that they mocked her, her ears were spared all knowledge of the infamies they spoke. Her voices, too, were still with her at times, though fitfully and at long intervals. She was, perhaps, the most unhappy woman then living in the world.

XXXIV

HOW LAHIRE CAME TO JOAN

ON the evening of that final day of trial, Joan lay asleep in her wretched cell. At a table hard by three English soldiers—the same, according to Dom Gregory, as those that talked of her before Orleans—were seated drinking and playing at cards.

“Curse the luck!” cried Peter.

“Bless the luck, say I!” said John, raking in his money.

“Try again,” suggested Harry, shuffling the dirty pack.

Peter refused.

“Not I. I’m sick of the cards.”

He looked towards the pallet where Joan lay asleep.

“Curse me if the slut is not asleep again! She’s always sleeping.”

“When she isn’t snivelling her silly prayers to the devil,” Harry amended.

“Why,” John asked, drunkenly, “should she sleep when we have to wake and watch?”

“Why, indeed,” Harry agreed. “Let’s wake the jade.”

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He rose and went softly on tiptoe to the bedside. Then, putting his hands to his mouth, he gave a hideous bellow. Joan awoke with a scream.

"What is it?" she moaned, while the soldiers rocked with laughter.

"Did I frighten you, witch?" Peter asked, with a leer. "Did you think the devil, your lord and lover, had come to carry you to hell?"

Joan stared at him and shook her head pathetically.

"Damn the drab!" John cursed. "How sillily she stares!"

"Pretends she doesn't know good English," Harry protested; "as if the devil's by-blow couldn't talk all tongues."

Peter, hideously affecting sentimentality, pretended to woo Joan, stooping over her where she shrank upon the bed.

"Dear Joan, sweet Joan, don't you mind the rogues."

He drew his sword as he spoke, and approached it so near to her huddled body as to prick her a little, and she shrank anew.

"We understand each other, don't we, my lady mewcat?"

He pricked her again, and again she shrank, but kept herself from crying out.

"Why so coy, cony?"

Harry was delighted at this sport.

"If we were left in peace," he said, "we might have some fun with the trollop. But there's always some damned monk at the door."

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Peter pricked Joan again, and grinned to see how she shrank.

"We'll have fun by-and-by—won't we, mawkin?—when I carry you home to England, to Trigham in Kent. How the old folk will stare when they see my French doxy! Ho, ho! Will you love me as well as you loved your first husband the devil?"

"Or as you loved King Charlie?" John questioned.

"Or as you loved Lahire?" Harry added.

The door of the cell opened and a man in a monk's habit entered the cell. The soldiers paused in their play to stare at him. They knew well enough who he was; they knew he was the monk Nicholas Loyseleur, who, for some reason or other which they could not understand, was daily permitted by special favor of my Lord of Warwick to visit the prisoner and to speak with her for as long as he pleased.

They had never exchanged any speech with the monk after the first day of his visits, when the captain of the guard had explained to them that he was to have free access to the prisoner and was not to be interfered with in his interviews, for none of the soldiers knew any French beyond a badly pronounced oath or so, and the seeming monk, Loyseleur, knew no English. So when he came and sat with Joan and cajoled her, advising her to her hurt, the soldiers, unable to follow what was said, paid no attention to his presence and amused themselves with drink and play.

Had they been more heedful of the monk, they

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might have noted a change in him to-day: his smooth face did not seem as sallow as was its wont, nor his eyes as mean and cunning; under the monk's hood a face showed more bronzed and warlike than monastic, and very bright, fierce eyes looked upon the soldiers. But the soldiers saw no change. A French monk was a French monk and not worth their attention, and even if the stranger's hood had not been drawn so close about his head, none of them would have detected any difference in his aspect.

They did, however, speedily detect a difference in his conduct. This time, instead of going directly to the bed where the wretched woman lay, the monk paused at the table where the soldiers sprawled, and greeted them with a "Pax vobiscum," at which they grinned; then, stretching out his hand, he took the cup of wine which stood in front of one of the soldiers and lifted it to his lips. The angry soldier made to restrain him, but with his disengaged hand the monk delivered him a push that sent him staggering from his bench to the floor; and before he could recover himself the monk had tasted a little of the wine and made a wry face over it. Shaking his head, the monk produced from under his robe a goodly leather bottle, and, withdrawing the stopper from it, placed it under the nose of the soldier nearest to him.

The soldiers, who had been so taken by surprise at the monk's behavior that they had not found time to resent the violence offered to their comrade, now began to take an interest in the proceedings of their

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visitor. The man to whose nose the bottle was held inhaled a delicious fragrance. The monk emptied the cup which he had taken on the floor, poured, or seemed to pour, a little of his own liquor into it, and drank it off, or seemed to drink it off, with every display of relish. The soldier whom the monk had so roughly handled was now on his legs again, and as interested a spectator as his fellows. The monk handed the leather bottle to the man who had been permitted to sniff its rich odor, but, before relinquishing it, the monk pointed to the middle of the bottle, tapped the portion above this point with his finger and pointed it at the soldiers, then tapped the lower portion and pointed to himself.

Most of the soldiers stared in stupid amazement, but one, less thick-witted than his fellows, guessed the riddle and explained to his companions that he believed that the old skinflint meant them to leave some of the drink for him. He nodded, therefore, agreement to these terms without the slightest intention of adhering to them, and the monk abandoned his flagon, uttered another "Pax vobiscum," and, leaving the table, moved slowly towards the wooden bed whereon Joan lay.

"Pax vobiscum, filia," the monk said, softly.

Joan, who had been shivering on the bed with her face in her hands, listened to the voice with a sudden attention.

"Keep very still," the monk went on. "Show no surprise. Speak low, as you always speak to your confessor."

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"Lahire!" Joan said, in a low voice of joy and wonder.

Lahire laid finger to lip. "No names, Maid."

He glanced at the soldiers and resumed, composedly:

"No matter, those knaves are deep as their ears in drink."

He paused an instant.

"God bless you, Maid!" he said, and took a deep breath.

Joan reached out a thin, manacled hand to him.

"How are you here?" she asked.

"Thanks to Brother Nicholas Loyseleur," Lahire replied, with a grim chuckle.

"Where is he?" Joan asked. In the ecstasy of her joy at seeing Lahire she had forgotten about Loyseleur, and instantly her sweet spirit was pricked with regret for her forgetfulness.

"By this time," said Lahire, devoutly, "I hope Brother Nicholas is well below the bridge, swollen with water like a drowned puppy."

Joan started.

"What has happened to him?" she asked, anxiously. It must be remembered that she trusted Nicholas Loyseleur.

"He was your enemy, Maid. Everything he advised you to do he advised by the command of Gilles de Laval in the interests of England and Burgundy."

Joan began to sob silently. Here was a new thorn to pierce her flesh.

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"I believed in him—I believed in him. He said he came from my country; he said he would save me."

"Men are worse than you would think, Maid," Lahire said, gravely, "though there are some that try to better themselves to your wishes."

Joan stroked the back of his hand fondly. She had thought she could trust Loyseleur, but she knew that she could trust Lahire.

"How did you get here?" she asked, with something of the old, simple eagerness in her manner.

"That," said Lahire, soberly, "is a long story, to be summed up in the fact that I am here."

"To what end?" Joan asked, piteously.

"To save you, Maid," Lahire answered, cheerfully.

Joan gave a little cry of joy. The release she had hoped for, prayed for, always devoutly looked for and longed for, had it really come at last, at this eleventh hour?"

"To save me?" she cried, with the high delight of a child to whom some long-deferred gift is at length given.

She had raised her voice, but the soldiers yonder paid no heed. They were wagging heavy heads over the game.

"I come to save you," reiterated Lahire; "not by the sword, alas—though, by my sword! I would have done it with the sword if will had jumped with wish. But 'twas not possible, for the English hold Rouen thousands thick. So I have to do it by guile. I have been here for days in disguise, seeking a way to you.

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To-day I found the way to you and the way for you."

The joy that was shining on Joan's face suddenly faded. She sat up on her bed and sat very still, as if listening.

"I can hear nothing," she said, sadly. Then to the question on Lahire's face Joan answered:

"My voices promised they would tell me when deliverance was at hand. They have not spoken."

"Let them speak by my lips," Lahire demanded. "Listen: I have drugged the wine those beasts drink; they will sleep like swine for an hour or more. Yonder pig-faced devil keeps the key of your chains. I will make bold to borrow it of him. Once free, you will don my gown and become the monk Loyseleur, with the monk's pass for Rouen."

Joan's pale face had flushed anew with desire and hope of freedom. But she thought of him before she thought of herself.

"And you?" she asked. Lahire explained.

"I borrow one of these gentlemen's garments and armor. Together we walk free into the dawn. I have Xaintrailles and a levy of men waiting outside the gates. Hurrah!"

Joan's face was so bright with hope that it was a joy to see her. She might have been back in Domremy beneath the Fairies' Tree, with all the kind winds breathing blessings on her.

"How sweet it is to think of freedom! Yet still I hear nothing," she added, more sadly. She was torn

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with yearning for freedom, but she did not think of liberty without the sanction of celestial voices.

"You hear me," Lahire said, reassuring her. "But we can do nothing till those brutes fall asleep. How have you fared in this place, Maid?"

Joan sighed.

"Very wretchedly. I thought I could bear all that Heaven might please to send, but I never thought of this. The endless trial, all those hostile faces, these savage soldiers always here day and night. I cannot tell what they say, but they strike me and shame me—"

"They shall march to hell to-night," Lahire muttered.

Joan calmed him.

"Let them be. They are no worse than their betters. The Lord Stafford tried to kill me in a rage because I told him that if his English were a hundred thousand more they should never hold sweet France. Then another lord strove to wrong me worse than death; and the Duke of Bedford spied on me through I know not what peep-hole when the duchess came here with her women."

"You English, you English!" Lahire repeated, bitterly; "it will take a long time to be even with you."

Joan was weeping softly now, but her tears were not unhappy tears, for her swimming eyes saw free spaces and herself a free woman therein.

"I am weak to weep for so little, for I live and I see you again, and maybe I shall go hence if my voices do

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but speak to me. But I fear. Is not Gilles de Laval here?"

"He came yesterday," Lahire said. "How did you know?"

"I saw him in a dream," Joan answered. "I see him now. He is coming here. He is at the great gate at this moment."

Lahire gripped the framework of the bed.

"Is he alone?" he asked, eagerly, and Joan replied:

"He is alone."

Lahire glanced at the soldiers. They were now heavy with the wine and their heads drooped over their cards.

"Then the Lord has delivered him into our hands," he whispered, and showed her how, in his belt under his gown, he carried a short, heavy fighting-axe. But Joan shook her head at the sight.

"God has not made me his judge, nor you his executioner," she said.

"He is marked for death," Lahire protested. "Let him die."

Joan laid a thin hand on his wrist and said, with a rapt gaze:

"He crosses the court-yard; his foot is on the stairs. I shall know when I see him what is the will of God. If he is to die by your hand, then I shall cry out that God has judged him; but if I pray Heaven to have mercy on his soul, then you must let him go."

"Must I obey?" Lahire asked, piteously. He was longing to settle scores with Gilles de Laval.

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"You must, indeed," Joan said, with something of the old decision. "Hark! Now he is in the long corridor. Do you hear?"

"I hear him now," Lahire said, and rose to his feet. He moved into a shadowed place behind a pillar, where any one standing by the bed would have his back turned to him. Beneath his robe he grasped the handle of his axe tightly. He knew that his enemy would take him for Loyseleur and have no suspicion of him. Then the door opened and Gilles de Laval entered. The soldiers stopped in their heavy playing and stared at him stupidly, and began to sing a snatch of a drinking-song:

"There were three kings in Cumberland
As drunk as drunk could be—"

Gilles frowned on them.

"Silence, dogs, while I am here!"

He took some money from his pouch and threw it on the table. While the soldiers clawed at it heavily he came to the bed and addressed Joan.

"Maid, we meet again."

"I was expecting you," Joan said, calmly. But her manacled hands were pressed against her heart as if she feared its beating might betray her dream of freedom.

"Have you still some power?" Gilles sneered. "Well, Maid, you have failed."

Joan denied his taunt.

"I have not failed. My King is crowned, the half

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of France is free; I have saved a woman's soul from your snares; and, whatever bechance, I stand on the edge of heaven."

Lahire, still in the shadow, lifted the axe in his hands, ready to strike and slay. At their table the soldiers were sinking deeper into stupor.

"On the edge of death," Gilles retorted.

"I do not fear to die," Joan declared, "though I would live a little longer if it were God's will that I might serve France as I have served France."

Gilles came nearer to her.

"I can save you from your fate. Even at this hour I can save you if I choose, by the favor of the Duke of Burgundy. All that I ask in return is that you serve my master, Satan, and serve me. If not, you must die."

"You shall not save me," Joan answered, "nor can Satan save you from the hand of God."

Gilles mocked at her.

"You were always a bragging lass."

"You would die now if it were God's will and if I said the word that God had judged you."

Lahire, in the shadow, lifted the axe higher. Gilles laughed.

"You are a mad witch."

Joan went on, in a level voice:

"But you are doomed to live till you die a worse death. I see you in prison, I see stern faces judging you, I see a gibbet and you swinging from it, and there will be a fire beneath your feet. I hear priests pray-

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ing for the stained soul of the most high, most powerful, most redoubtable Lord Gilles de Montmorency de Laval, Baron of Rais, Count of Brienne, Marshal of France."

"You are a fool," Gilles said, "and a false prophetess, and I leave you to die in your folly."

Joan looked steadily at him, and her sad eyes daunted him.

"You are an enemy to God, to your King, and to me. To God and to your King I leave your judgment. But from my soul I forgive you and all you have done to me and mine. Go, and may Heaven have mercy on your soul."

Gilles stared at her for a moment, made as if to speak, kept silence; then, with a shrug of his shoulders, he turned to where, as he thought, Loyseleur stood. "Come to me to-morrow," he said. Then he left the cell, and the door closed behind him.

Lahire came out of the shadow.

"Why did you let him go?" he asked, plaintively.

Joan smiled wistfully.

"My voices were calling to me, 'Forgive your enemies.'"

"Well," Lahire acquiesced, "your will is my will. Come, Maid, we must despâch."

"Alas, I do not hear my voices now," she said. "They do not say I shall be saved. Lahire, Lahire, can you save me if my saints do not give consent?"

"We may take their consent for granted," Lahire

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urged. The way is clear and the soldiers are helpless."

He pointed to where they sprawled over the table with their heads on their arms.

But Joan did not smile.

"My voices," she said, mournfully, her words like the words of a dirge, "they told me they would tell me when my time for deliverance came, but they are silent. What shall I do, dear Lord, what shall I do? Let me go hence from this horrible place, let me be free again and happy."

"Why, come with me, Maid," Lahire entreated. "I will take the key of your chains from this fellow."

He moved towards the sleeping soldier, but Joan, who had thrown herself upon her bed in an agony of hushed sobs, suddenly raised herself and stopped him.

"Wait! wait!" she cried. "Dear God, it is too late; it is not to be. People are coming here—many people." She had seemed to stand at the foot of the Fairies' Tree, to tread the path to the shrine of our Lady of Domremy—to be free, and now all was over.

"It cannot be," Lahire declared. "They do not change the watch for an hour."

"Indeed," Joan persisted, "I hear the fall of many feet, and murmur of speech and the clash of arms."

"Great God, I hear nothing," Lahire groaned.

Joan prayed fervently, her mind distraught with longing to escape, with wish to be obedient to Heaven.

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"Heaven, is it Thy will my life be spared? Speak to me! speak to me!" She wrung her hands and moaned. "Alas, there is no word, no word."

Lahire, listening at the door, turned to her.

"You are right," he said. "I hear men coming."

"They come for me," Joan said.

"Are you sure?" gasped Lahire.

"Quite sure," Joan answered, with a wan smile.

"Comrade, our journey together ends now."

Lahire was by her side.

"I will die with you."

Joan looked at him with a faint assumption of her old air of whimsical command when she would bid him do something that went against his grain.

"No. I am still your general. You must not deny me service now. Live to serve God, France, and the King. Live to keep my memory clean, that when we meet in heaven I may say, 'Well done, good and faithful soldier.'"

Lahire tried to speak and could not.

"Obey!" Joan said, firmly, tenderly. "Be with me to the end. They are here."

Now the noise of men came nearer, louder. The door was opened and a priest entered. It was Father Isambard, one that had always dealt gently with Joan. Behind him, the corridor was seen to be full of armed men.

"Daughter," said Isambard, gently, "you must come with me."

"Whither?" Joan asked, sadly.

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“First to the church,” said Isambard, “then to the market-place to hear your sentence.”

Joan clasped her hands, and Lahire heard her whisper:

“My voices, my voices are calling to me. This is my deliverance.”

XXXV

HOW JOAN CAME TO THE MARKET-PLACE

THE great space of the old market-place at Rouen was the centre of existence in the town on that May morning. From an early hour it had been occupied by a large number of soldiers, who ranged along its four sides so as to preserve an open space in the midst. Behind the living barriers thus formed the population of Rouen crowded and pushed, jostled and elbowed, to get a good view of what was about to happen. Fortunate, indeed, were those considered whose dwellings were situated directly on the market-place or so near to it in abutting streets that by climbing roofs or craning out of casements some glimpse might be gained of the scene. All the windows of all the houses in the market-place were thronged with spectators—men, women, and children—who found their entertainment in watching the humors of the crowd below while waiting for the spectacle that was so soon to be afforded them. The people of Rouen did not dearly love their English masters; many of them were secretly disaffected and would have gladly shown their disaffection in deeds if they had dared,

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or if the English strength had not been so great as to render any attempt against it idle as well as fatal. Many, therefore, felt no little sympathy for that day's victim, but those that sympathized, as well as those that were indifferent and those that were positively opposed, were as ready to be witnesses of that day's business.

In one of the spaces kept vacant by the soldiers a scaffolding had been erected, hung with purple velvet and fitted with seats for the comfort of the Lord Bishop of Beauvais and other high ecclesiastics, and for the comfort of great English lords and for great French lawyers. In the middle of the square a wooden platform stood, with steps leading to it and a great beam rising perpendicularly from it. At the foot of the platform innumerable fagots of wood were piled, and to the head of the beam a square of wood was nailed on which were painted in bold, black letters the opprobrious epithets which her judges applied to Joan.

These were the words on the placard: "Joan, who has called herself the Maid, liar, pernicious, abuser of the people, divineress, blasphemer of God, presumptuous, misbeliever of the faith of Jesus Christ, boaster, idolater, cruel, dissolute, invocator of devils, apostate, schismatic, and heretic."

The people in the crowd were very turbulent, as such crowds always are; and they were very uncomfortable, for while those in front were being pressed upon by those behind that sought better vantage-

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ground, they were rudely jostled, hustled, bullied, and even banged by the soldiers that kept the empty space; also, they were beginning to be impatient, for by this time they had learned by heart, such of them as cared to do so, the denunciatory words upon the placard at the stake, and they were eager now for something more than the sight of their neighbors' faces and the helmets of the soldiers. By-and-by, however, their patience was rewarded by the arrival of the Bishop of Beauvais and his colleagues, and by their passage, a solemn pageant, to the stand hung with purple velvet which awaited them. For a while the crowd watched with interest the bishop and his illustrious company of ecclesiastics and lawyers and great English lords taking the places appointed for them, and thus a little more time was whiled away not unpleasantly for the spectators, who amused themselves in affixing names, often quite inaccurately, to the various distinguished personages seated behind and beside Cauchon.

But presently a loud cry rang out from those that were in upper windows. "Here she comes!" the shout went, and then those below knew that those above had caught a glimpse of something stirring in the crowded street that led into the square, and became excited by the knowledge. The crowd swayed anew against the stolid barrier of soldiery, and scrambled and tussled for a better view, and got rapped on its head generally by the hard fists of the soldiers. And then a great roar went up, followed suddenly

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by a great silence, as Joan came into the market-square.

When Joan left her prison, she was taken to the church and there dressed in the black robes which the Inquisition always accorded to its victims, and on the head that had carried a helmet so gallantly they stuck a fantastic, hideous mitre with "Heretic, apostate, and idolater" writ large upon it. The Maid shivered as they thus evilly robed and crowned her for her martyrdom, but she kept her peace and went for a while in silence through the long lane of soldiers, some six hundred in number, towards the market-place. On the one side of her was Father Isambard, the priest who had treated her gently, and on the other side went one in a monk's habit whom those that thought about it at all took to be Master Nicholas Loyseleur. The monk kept his hood about his face, but Isambard believed him to be Loyseleur, with whom he had never spoken before and never seen plainly, and so no question was raised as to his right to accompany the Maid on her last journey.

The soldiers openly exulted as they saw the Maid going to her fate arrayed in the grim panoply of the Inquisition. Was this the woman warrior who had flung their pride into the dust at Orleans, who had scattered their chivalry at Jargeau, who had overthrown their captains at Patay? Patently they rejoiced to see the tears that ran down the worn and weary face. The witch was in their power, the witch should die by fire, and the glorious rule of England be

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re-established in France forever. Through the rejoicing legionaries Joan went on her dolorous way, Isambard beside her, praying for her, exhorting her; and he that passed for Nicholas Loyseleur whispering every now and then, "Courage, Joan!"

So at last they came to the market-square and heard the great, thunderous roar that greeted their arrival, and that was followed then by so deep a silence. The Maid looked about her through her tears at that awful assemblage: the eager crowd, the fierce soldiers, the gorgeous group of judges, throned on their purple velvet, and then the bare, ugly stake, with the fagots at its foot, and the executioners standing by it.

XXXVI

HOW JOAN WAS DONE TO DEATH

JOAN cast her haggard eyes around her and clasped her hands tightly. "Oh, Rouen, Rouen! is it here that I must die?" Lahire heard her say to herself.

"Courage, Joan!" he again whispered.

And then began the dreadful business of the day. Nicole Midy, the great dignitary of the Paris University, had his sermon to preach, a long sermon and a solemn and a pompous, dwelling on the Maid's sins and ending by telling her that she was now cut off from the Church, cast out of its fold, given over to the secular arm. While he was speaking, Joan was praying silently to herself, and did not seem to heed the denunciations of the preacher. When he had done, when the words that flung her forth from the communion of the Church had been spoken, Pierre Cauchon rose and addressed the girl.

"Be busy with your salvation, Joan," he bade her. "Remember your crimes with contrition and penitence." And in this manner he exhorted her for some time, with much iteration and vehemence.

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When he came to an end of his angry exhortations, Joan lifted her head and looked boldly at him. "You wicked bishop," she said, "I die through you, but when you meet me at God's judgment-seat you will not be so bold."

A deep flush darkened the bishop's heavy cheeks, and a murmur ran over all who heard Joan's words—a murmur of surprise, perhaps, partly a murmur of pity.

Father Isambard spoke to her softly. "Gently, daughter, gently," he entreated.

Joan turned to him, asking, with a kind of sad humor, "May I not speak my mind before I die?" She was silent for a few seconds, then she added, "It is no matter. Give me a cross to lay against my heart."

Isambard, by some chance, had not a cross with him. The monk that passed for Nicholas Loyseleur bent down and picked up a stick from the fagots that lay at the foot of the stake. He snapped this stick across his knee; he tore a strip of stuff from the sleeve of his gown and tied the two twigs together into a rude cross. This he gave to Joan without a word, and Joan kissed it and placed it in her breast.

"This shall perish with me," she said. Then again she asked Isambard, "Father, can you not hold a cross before my eyes until the end?"

Isambard turned to the supposed Loyseleur and bade him go to the church of Saint Saviour and bring thence a tall cross. Lahire went in silence over the open space into the church.

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While he was away one of the English soldiers, chafing at the slowness of the proceedings and the delayed vengeance, called out, shouting towards those that sat on the purple scaffold, "Come, you priests, are you going to keep us here all day?"

Cauchon was something vain of his knowledge of English, and he understood the soldier's words; he understood also the menace in the sound of the soldier's voice and in the agitation of his comrades, all clamoring for their prey. So now he rose from his seat again and proceeded to deliver judgment.

"You, Joan, who call yourself the Maid, liar, deceiver, witch, blasphemer, traitor to the faith, idolater, devil-worshipper, apostate, schismatic, and heretic, I here declare you rejected and cut off from the grace and communion of the Church, and deliver you to the secular arm."

As the bishop pronounced these fatal words, Lahire came out of the church, carrying the tall cross, and, going swiftly across the square, stood by the side of Joan. Joan answered the bishop firmly.

"You call me many names that are false and foolish, but French folk will think otherwise of you and me now and hereafter!" In a lower voice she said to Lahire, "Good-bye."

Lahire held her hand for a moment. "Joan, Maid," he murmured; then let her hand go and pulled his hood closer about his face.

Joan turned to Isambard.

"Bless me, father," she said, faintly.

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Isambard extended his hand in benediction: "Benedico te, filia, in nomine Patri et Filii et Spiritui Sancti."

Now the soldiers were growing more and more impatient at the delay. They had come to see their enemy killed, and they fretted at the hindering ceremonies. "Death to the witch!" they began to call out here and there, and soon the cry was caught up by the mass of soldiers and thundered about the market-place.

Joan's time had come. Some soldiers laid hands upon her and began to drag her towards the stake, about which the executioner and his assistants were now bestirring themselves.

Joan spoke to her captors with something of her old spirit. "Gently, friends," she pleaded, ironically, "I am not fighting with you now."

They did not understand her; they understood nothing but the fact that they were dragging her to her death. They hurried her to the foot of the stake, and there the executioner and his assistants took her out of their hands and led her up the steps, and fastened her body to the great beam.

Isambard was steadily praying by her side, and Lahire held up the great cross in front of her face. Joan began to pray aloud.

"Dear God, before whose throne my spirit shall so soon appear, grant that as I forgive my enemies, they may forgive me and be forgiven! Heaven have pity on the sweet land of France! Heaven give comfort to

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the King of France! Gracious saints, strengthen me now to pass through fire to eternal life!"

The soldiers' clamor was increasing. "Fire! Fire!" they shouted, "Fire for the witch!" and shook their fists at Joan and raved at her in their triumph.

Joan spoke again. "All Christian souls pray for me!" she said; and then the executioner came forward with a lighted torch and set it to the piled-up fagots.

Lahire, to the end, could never clearly recall what happened thereafter. He seemed to stiffen into stone, to be capable of nothing but the knowledge that he must hold the great cross firmly. He had a confused sense of leaping flames and rising smoke, and an unconquerable agony at his heart. All about him there was now a great silence.

Many wonders have been testified to concerning that tragedy. Some thought that the swirling gray smoke which hid the victim fashioned itself legibly into the shape of the Saviour's name. Others believed that out of the leaping flames they saw a white dove rise and wing its way to heaven. The executioner himself is reported to have sworn that he found the heart of Joan in the ashes, uninjured by the fire and still full of blood.

But Lahire saw nothing, heard nothing, stood rigidly extending the cross.

Now, when the sacrifice was accomplished, a storm that had been creeping on the city for some time broke out in sudden fury. A raging wind tore over the market-place, accompanied by a driving rain that

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stung and chilled all who felt it, like blows from whips of ice. A sullen darkness blotted out the day, broken only by fierce gleams of lightning, and through that darkness the roaring of thunder sounded like titanic voices, imprecating vengeance. Before the rage of that storm all fled from the market-place, which was soon wholly deserted save for one in a monk's habit, that held a great cross. He stood at the foot of the blackened pyre, and, looking about him with wild eyes, cried in a great voice, "You foes of France, you are all lost men, for you have slain a saint!"

XXXVII

HOW VENGEANCE OVERTOOK JOAN'S ENEMIES

DOM GREGORY tells us that on the same day and hour that Joan of Arc perished in the market-place at Rouen the saved soul of Catherine passed from her sinful body. She was buried with great honor and ceremony by the sisterhood in whose cloisters she had sought sanctuary and found peace.

After her death it seems that the King's grief gradually abated. He sought and found consolation in other loves; but with the passing of time grew something more of the King and less of the pleasure-seeker, and came to think with a better judgment of the Maid and martyr who had saved his kingdom.

Dom Gregory shows little interest in, and pays little heed to, that mysterious and fitful appearance of the woman who pretended that she was the Maid of Orleans, and that she had escaped from the ordeal of fire at Rouen. He mentions it briefly as a mere legend, no more to be considered seriously than that other fantastic theory which sometimes found supporters in his day, that Joan, the daughter of Jacques d'Arc,

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of Domremy, was in truth the daughter of Isabella of Bavaria and that Duke of Orleans who was killed for the pleasure of a Duke of Burgundy. The chronicler mentions these dreams but to dismiss them. He has other work in hand in dealing with the years that brimmed with war and the slow recession of the English.

Dom Gregory's battle-pictures have been done better by other hands. They are of less value to us than the pages which he devotes to the doom that came upon the Lord Gilles of Laval. His crimes found him out. Day by day, month by month, year by year, he became less the soldier, less the scholar, more the voluptuary, more the doer of deeds of blood. As he sank in the slough of his sins, he became less careful to conceal his crimes; and in a while private whispers against him grew into public rumors, that swelled at last into flagrant accusations. He was a great lord in an age when great lords might do much with impunity, in defiance of justice and public opinion. But the Lord Gilles of Laval abused his privilege, and found himself one day, to his amazement, arraigned as if he were no more than a common felon on a series of charges that began with murder and culminated in sorcery. His strength, once threatened, fell swiftly to pieces: servants betrayed him, friends abandoned him, evidence in plenty was forthcoming; he was proved to have practised magic, to have served the Black Mass, to have worshipped Satan; he was proved to have done to death many women and many chil-

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dren. He was found guilty, and, though he protested furiously against his trial and those who tried him, he was duly sentenced to death. Then he confessed his sins, and, after that confession, was executed, being hanged upon a gallows like a wayside thief. A fire was lit beneath his feet, but because he was a great lord his kin were allowed to cut him down before the fire reached his body, and to bear him away for burial. Such was the end of this great criminal and strange man.

As for the others that were the worst enemies of Joan, Dom Gregory records their ill-fortunes with a pleased sense of the fitness of things. Did not Master Nicole Midy, that preached so vehemently in denunciation of Joan in the market-place of Rouen, die of leprosy a little while later? Did not Pierre Cauchon, the wicked bishop, die suddenly in the very hands of the barber that shaved his swollen cheeks, within a year of his victim's death? Dom Gregory hints at something mysterious about the bishop's fate; tells about the disappearance of the barber after the bishop's death; mentions without crediting a legend that this barber was no other than Lahire himself, working out a cherished vengeance. Dom Gregory believes otherwise, and there is nothing in recorded history to support this curious conjecture.

There is only one other part of Dom Gregory's chronicle that concerns us, but it concerns us nearly, for it deals with Lahire.

XXXVIII

HOW LAHIRE CAME AGAIN TO DOMREMY

IT was summer again in Domremy, the twentieth summer that had cheered the world with sunlight since the Maid had gone from Domremy to her glory and her death. Still the Fairies' Tree stood in its clearing, fair as a lily yet in its majesty of sweeping boughs, still loved and garlanded by a new generation of lads and lassies.

In the golden afternoon of a gracious day a little company of boys and girls were skipping and singing before the venerable tree, very much as Hauviette and Mengette and Isabellette had skipped and sung in the days of their lively youth. But those that danced round the tree now were children, not striplings, their little heads, brown, black, and flaxen, bobbing in the sunlight, a merry rabble of boys and girls of ages ranging from seven to ten; the eldest of them all, a demure, long-legged slip of a lass, who might be nigh fourteen, and whom her companions called Colinette. The children were singing, as they danced, verses of the Tree Song which persisted through generations, changing a little with the changing years. This was what they sang:

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"Hoblin Goblin of the Tree,
Jack-o'-Lanthorn to the mire,
Ever ready to set free
Sheep from pen and kine from byre:
Grant my heart's desire to me,
Grant to me my heart's desire.

"Downy Brownyn of the Tree,
Thing of kindness, thing of ire,
Take our flowers and pay our fee—
Hearken to the children's choir:
Grant my heart's desire to me,
Grant to me my heart's desire."

The little folk were so intent upon their sport and its rustic invocation that they did not heed, if indeed they heard, the sound of footsteps coming softly and slowly through the trees. A man in the habit of a mendicant friar came over the edge of the hill and down the slope, and paused at the fringe of the clearing, leaning on his long staff and looking at the children wistfully.

Suddenly the children caught sight of the stranger, and, startled, less by his appearance—for wandering friars were familiar objects in those days—than by the suddenness of the appearance, the song died upon their lips, they stopped their dance, broke their ring, and huddled together in a little, suspicious group, with Colinette sturdily in front of them.

When the friar realized the effect of his presence, he set about to reassure the playfellows. Pushing back his hood, he disclosed to them a lean, brown visage seamed with scars and wrinkled by cares and crowned

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with grizzled hair. The worn face smiled very friendly and the dark eyes were full of kindness.

"Do not fear me, little people," the stranger said—and his voice was very gentle and tender. "I am only a poor padaway friar, and, if you think that my face is ill-favored, I have a kind heart for little children."

As he spoke he moved a little nearer and seated himself slowly on a fallen tree-trunk that often served as a seat for rustic sweethearts. Reassured by his voice, the children began to advance towards him in little groups of twos and threes. Colinette had already taken the stranger under her protection and was standing by his side. She noted how weary he looked and how travel-worn, and she felt a great pity for him, she did not know why.

The friar, being seated, spoke again to the children.

"What were you doing when I came, hand-in-hand around the tree?"

As the most of the children were bashfully silent, Colinette made herself spokeswoman.

"If you please, sir, this is the Fairies' Tree of Domremy, and we were dancing the Tree Dance and singing the Tree Song, as folk have done since the world began."

The friar smiled.

"So long as that? God bless you, children, and God bless your tree, for I have known it since the world began."

Some of the children seemed alarmed at this state-

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ment and shrank back a little, but the friar soon dissipated their fears with his pleasant laugh.

"Since the world began for me, I should say. Do not be frightened, children—little ones; I am not the Wandering Jew. But I saw your tree once, long ago, and I have walked many miles to see it again, even from the gates of Rome."

Colinette took up his statement with much gravity of manner.

"You walked all that way to see our tree? Do you believe in the fairies, then?"

The friar took one of Colinette's little, sunburned hands in his long, brown fingers as he answered her.

"I believe in anything that youth and goodness and innocence believe." He paused for a moment, looking into the wondering eyes of the child. "You should all be angels, by right, in Domremy. Are you all very good children?"

With the single exception of Colinette, all the children instantly answered, in chorus:

"Yes, sir."

The friar seemed much amused. "Gallantly unanimous," he commented, and laughed till he began to cough, and for a while the cough racked him sharply. When it had passed off, Colinette put out her hand and touched the friar lightly on the shoulder.

"No, sir," she said, soberly. "We are not all good, nor always good. I am often very naughty, indeed."

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The friar looked at her approvingly.

"You are an honest trot. But the others—are they always as good as they profess to be?"

Colinette swung round and looked at her companions with girlish sternness.

"Are you?" she questioned, judicially; and the children, much perturbed by this direct appeal from their little chieftainess, looked from her to the friar and from the friar to her, and faltered:

"No, sir."

The friar stretched his arms in satisfaction.

"Come," he cried, "that is quite a relief to my mind. I should not like to think there were such impossible children, even in Domremy."

He turned to Colinette and questioned her.

"Why did you tell me the truth, little girl?"

Colinette answered him with a pretty solemnity.

"My father says I must always speak the truth, for the sake of one who always spoke it."

The friar's face grew grave.

"Who is your father?"

Colinette dipped him a little courtesy.

"Gérardin d'Épinal, sir."

"Then I know who always spoke the truth," the friar said, softly, rather to himself than to Colinette. But Colinette heard him, and went on:

"It was Joan, of our village, whom the wicked English burned."

"Wicked English," the friar echoed. "Ay, and wicked French, too, some of them, who must bear

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their share of the shame. So you remember Joan of Arc at Domremy?"

"How could we ever forget her?" Colinette asked. "At her request the King abolished all taxes on our village for ever and ever."

"Amen," said the mendicant friar, piously. "Let us pray that all the King's successors may keep the King's faith." He touched the little wreath of flowers that hung from the girl's left elbow. "What are you going to do with those garlands?"

"We are taking them," said Colinette, "to the shrine of Our Lady of Domremy yonder"—and she pointed to where the little chapel stood on the crest of the hill—"to lay them on the altar in the name of our dear Joan. Our fathers and mothers say that while she was with us she dearly loved to do so."

The friar's brown hand gently touched the flowers, as if he gave each individual blossom his benediction. Then it rested on the fair hair of the child.

"You are a bright child," he said, "and a kind child and a pious child. You do well to think ever of her who was surely a divine child."

He was silent for a little space, as if memories of old times engulfed him. Then he looked up at Colinette, standing sedately before him.

"Will you do me a service, little pretty?"

The girl again dipped him a courtesy. She was a very ceremonious little piece of rusticity.

"Surely, sir."

"Is your father now in the village?" the friar asked.

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And when Colinette had nodded and murmured "Yes," he added:

"Will you skip to him and whisper him that a wandering friar who waits by the Fairies' Tree entreats some speech with him."

Colinette was prompt in obedience. She liked this strange friar, with his kindly speech and kindly, humorous eyes, and, anyway, he was a man of God and a traveller, and as such to be honored.

"Surely," she said again. "Without fail," she added, echoing the dear and simple affirmation of a girl that was twenty years dead. She turned to her little playmates, all clustered together and staring in astonishment at the alliance so promptly concluded between their little Amazon and the strange man in the shabby gown.

"Go on, you others, to the shrine. I will follow you presently."

But here the friar interposed.

"If you are not afraid to stay with the strange man, little people, I will tell you tales till your playmate returns."

Colinette gave her little companions a glance which suggested to their infantile intelligences that they would do well to accept the friar's offer. Their leader's approval and the eternal desire of the child to hear stories settled the matter. As a single child they clamored:

"Tell us tales, tell us tales."

The friar laughed.

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"Come on, then," he said, "boys and girls."

The children had crept quite close to him by now. He hoisted a boy child onto one knee and a girl child onto the other, and while Colinette was speeding through the trees in the direction of the village, as fast as her long legs could carry her, the other children had grouped themselves comfortably on the grass at the friar's feet and were staring up at him, open-mouthed, longing for the tales he had promised. The wandering friar looked down with a quite curious expression of pathos upon his unexpected congregation.

"I will tell you," he began, "a thing that happened to the noblest woman that ever lived in the world—of course, I mean your Joan, children."

The children all bobbed their heads, brown, black, and yellow, in unison. There was never a child in Domremy but was brought up in adoration of the Maid, and they all were eager to hear what the friar was going to tell them. So the friar had an enthusiastic audience when he began.

"We were riding through a ravaged land—"

But at this point one of the children, a rogue with curling, yellow hair, interrupted, as such children love to interrupt the opening of a tale.

"Did you know our Joan?"

The war-beaten, weather-beaten face of the friar seemed to light up as he answered, gladly:

"I saw her often."

"And did you know her comrade, Lahire?" another

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urchin questioned, a black-browed, pugnacious-looking little imp.

"I knew the man indifferently well," the friar answered, gravely. "But my tale is not of him, but of your Joan. She was riding through a ravaged land. Burgundians had been there with fire and sword; English had been there, burning and slaying. The land was black with ashes and brown with blood."

The children shivered as they listened, for the youngest of them had heard something of the terrible wars of which the last waves had only now ebbed back to Calais. The friar seemed content at the effect of his narrative. He resumed.

"Joan was crying, as she always cried, over the misery of France. She kept her bright eyes wide open, but the big tears ran down her cheeks and made great wet places on her surcoat."

There were tears in the friar's eyes as he spoke these words, and for a moment he paused. A little girl, unaccountably eager for historical accuracy, piped inquiry.

"Did you see this?"

The friar looked benignly on the child.

"I know of it from one that saw," he answered, discreetly, and continued his tale.

"We came to a hopeless, hideous place that had once been a brisk village, like your Domremy. It seemed deserted, but suddenly out of the rags and tatters of a hovel came a haggard woman, all black with smoke, that was holding two little boys by the hand."

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"Little boys like us?" interpolated the little, fair-haired ladkin.

The friar pinched a plump cheek.

"Little boys like you, only not so bonny, for their little cheeks were nipped with hunger, while yours, thank God, are plump and ruddy. The poor woman had lost her father in the wars, she had lost her brothers in the wars, she had lost her husband in the wars. But she said, proudly, pointing to the two children, 'I have saved these to fight for France.' That was all she thought of, you see, that her two sons still lived to grow up into stout soldiers and strive and, if need were, die to send the stranger out of France. Then your Joan jumped off her horse and caught the woman in her arms and kissed her gaunt cheeks and dry lips, and knelt at her feet and kissed her hands, for all that the woman could do to stay her. And after that she saw that the woman and her children were bestowed in safety. And as she rode away she said to a man that rode beside her that if it were permitted to her she could envy that woman who gave sons to France. And she was silent for quite a while after she said that."

The friar's voice dropped, and for a few seconds he was silent, and his little hearers were silent, too, for they realized dimly the beauty of his story. There were tears in the eyes of the children and tears in the eyes of the man.

Then the friar sent a swift glance, strong and yet mild, over all the childish faces turned on him, and concluded:

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"Now, you little people, you who are all sons and daughters of France, you must always act bravely and honorably, as good Frenchfolk should, for the sake of Joan the Maid."

There came to him a vehement little chorus of shrill childish pipes.

"We will! We will!"

The friar's dark face flushed with gratification. Then, lifting up his head, he caught sight of little, long-legged Colinette coming through the trees along the path that led from the village, and Colinette was leading a villager by the hand. It was many years since the friar had seen the face of the man, and at their last time of meeting they had parted on a stricken field; but the friar knew the man again in an instant, and his heart went out hotly to him. He cried to the children on his knees:

"Here comes my gossip. Run away to church, chicks."

The little, fair-haired boy touched the friar's thin cheek with his hand.

"You look tired, father," he said, gently.

The friar sighed.

"I am tired, child."

"Why do you not go to sleep here," his little sympathizer suggested—"on the nice, soft grass? We will cover you with leaves and flowers, so that you shall not feel the least bit cold."

The friar patted the little man on the back in cordial approval.

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“Faith, 'tis a friendly offer, but I have some talking to do before I think of sleeping; so off with you, innocents.”

He lifted the two children from his knees and rose to greet Colinette and the man with her, who were now under the shade of the Fairies' Tree.

“This is my father,” Colinette said, pointing to her companion. “Father, this is the good friar that asked for you.”

The friar stroked the girl's hair tenderly.

“Thank you, little maid.”

XXXIX

HOW LAHIRE STAYED IN DOMREMY

WHILE Colinette marshalled her little companions and led them up the path towards the little chapel of Our Lady of Domremy, Gérardin advanced towards the friar, who had pulled his hood about his face, and waited for the holy man to speak. Gérardin had grown portly with the progress of the years; there was something of the country gentleman in his carriage and habit, for all that he called himself no more than a plain farmer. Though the friar scanned him narrowly from under his hood, he did not speak, so Gérardin broke the silence.

“You wished to see me, father?”

The friar nodded.

“Yes, the time for a question or two. Are Hauvette and Mengette living here still?”

Something in the sound of the friar’s voice seemed familiar to Gérardin. He answered:

“Living and thriving, thanks be to God.”

“Married, belike?” said the friar.

“Surely,” Gérardin assented. “I said thriving. No woman thrives that lacks a good husband.”

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"There was a girl named Isabellette," said the friar. "Is she wed?"

Gérardin answered, with an air of grave satisfaction.

"Isabellette has been my wife these many years."

"I hope," said the friar, slowly, "that you love her as an honest man should love his honest wife."

"Certainly I so love her," Gérardin answered, emphatically. He was puzzled at the friar's questions, at the haunting, unrecalable tones of the friar's voice. But the friar's next words increased his amazement.

"I think there was a time when your thoughts turned to a star."

Gérardin looked sharply at the face that lay in the shadow of the cowl, and questioned, sharply:

"Are you of Domremy, father?"

The friar gave a sigh.

"I was only in Domremy once in all my life, long ago, and for a very little while, but Domremy is the sweetest spot on earth for me, outside Jerusalem."

"You served the Maid?" Gérardin cried at him, eagerly, with a queer tightening of his heart-strings.

"We served the Maid together," the friar answered. "Do you remember me?" He threw back his hood.

Gérardin stared at the brown face, scarred and seamed, at the keen eyes and the gray hair, and he knew now why the voice had seemed familiar.

"Lahire!" he cried.

"All that is left of him," answered the friar, and clasped him in his arms.

When Lahire released Gérardin from the brotherly

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hug which showed that the years had little abated the strength of the soldier's arms, the pair sat together side by side upon the tree-trunk and began to swap questions and memories.

"What have you been doing all these years"—so Gérardin set the ball rolling—"and what brings you here to Domremy in this habit?"

Lahire began to answer him point by point.

"What have I been doing? Carrying on the Maid's work. I wanted to die when she died, but it was not God's will that Englishman or Burgundian should be in at the killing of Lahire."

Gérardin laid a comrade's hand on his old comrade and commander's shoulder. "Thank God, you have come back to us!" he ejaculated, fervently.

Lahire protested.

"I am no good now. But the Maid bade me live with her last breath—bade me live and serve France as long as France needed my service. Well, I did my best, where many others did quite as well and some, perhaps, did better."

Gérardin interrupted him fondly. Across his mind there floated memories of that spring morning more than twenty years ago, when he, in his folly of youth, thought he might be as Lahire was, and heard Hauviette and Mengette say that Lahire breathed fire like a dragon and drank blood like an ogre. Gérardin was very little of a conscious philosopher, but just now he felt whimsically philosophic. What a cry from this summer afternoon to that spring morning! What

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marvels had happened and what a tragedy! And here was Lahire, like a ghost, recalling it all!

“Who could do better than Lahire?”

The words came from his heart, and their honest earnestness brought a glow to Lahire's cool blood as a sip of strong wine wakens the pulse of the fainting wayfarer. His brown face beamed on his old lieutenant.

“Be that as it may. The English rogues got hold of me once and kept me for two years in prison. They did not treat me badly—damn them! They seem to know how to treat men, though they do not know how to treat women. I won out, by-and-by, and harried them gladly. God be praised, France has quickened to some purpose in the last score of years. The King lolls at ease in his own capital. The English leopards vex no French winds now save the sea-winds at Calais, and your blustering, blundering Duke of Burgundy squats by his own fireside and dandles his Golden Fleece.”

He held out his hand and caught Gérardin's, that jumped to meet it, and the two comrades gripped hard in congratulation at the difference between the days that were and the days that are.

Lahire went on:

“You asked me why I wear this habit? Because my wars are over, because my work is done, because at last I found time to do what I resolved to do sooner or later on that day of doom in Rouen. I played a monk's part then, for I was with her to the end.”

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Here Lahire told Gérardin all that Gérardin did not know of that desperate attempt to save Joan from her fate. Gérardin was crying like a child when Lahire resumed.

"I played a monk's part then, but it came to me easily, for I was bred to be a priest. And what I was bred to, what I had played at, I was resolved to end as. So I doffed my armor, donned a friar's robes, after vows duly made and taken, tramped to Rome, spoke with the Pope and cleansed my soiled soul as well as his Holiness and I could manage the job between us."

Gérardin leaned back and looked at the wandering friar with wonder and astonishment. What a change was here from the old, would-be untamable Lahire, that allowed himself to be tamed by a girl's grace and to swear by his sword that had sworn his way merrily through all the calendars of hell and heaven!

"I cannot think of Lahire in this habit," he said, frankly, touching gently the tattered fringe of the friar's gabardine. Lahire laughed as if he were suddenly young again.

"The change is stranger than you can be aware of. When I seemed a swaggering braggart I was ever afraid. Though I wore a bold coat, I was white to the pith of the heart. Maid scared by mouse was more of a hero than I was, with a soldier or so against me; though the maid screamed and I kept my peace, though the maid let the mouse go free while I was apt to give a good account of my enemies. Fear

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burned in my body like a pale fire when I was a man-at-arms; but since I have worn this weed I have forgotten fear, which shows that some yards of gray stuff may cover more courage than pieces of plate-lapped mail."

Gérardin stared at him hard, once to make sure that Lahire was not mocking him, and again to make sure that Lahire was not mad. But Lahire's eyes were sane enough, and the smile on his lips was not a smile of derision. After a pause, Gérardin asked, hesitatingly, a question he yearned to put:

"You have been faithful to the Maid?"

Lahire answered:

"I have been faithful to the Maid."

There was another little pause, and then Gérardin said:

"She wished me to wed Isabellette."

Lahire clapped him on the shoulder.

"I know she did," he said, affectionately. "Many a time the Maid and I have prayed for your marriage—she because she knew all about the matter, I because I knew nothing about it, but wished what she wished."

Gérardin was silent. The years melted and he was again the Burgundian stripling that loved and loved in vain. He was a loyal husband to Isabellette of the pale-gold hair, but he remembered Joan. Lahire understood the silence, and went on:

"And now for your third question—why I come here. Well, I come with a piece of news that should set every bell in Domremy ringing, every heart in

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Domremy dancing, and set a light in every window in Domremy."

Gérardin listened in wonder to his vehement words.

"What news, Lahire?" he cried.

Lahire made a military salute.

"The King, God bless him and save him, though he behaved badly enough once, is minded to make tardy amends now. He has resolved to try again the case of the saint we serve in heaven, to try her this time with an honest judge, an honest jury, and honest advocates."

Gérardin stared in amazement at the eager face of his old commander. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"He cannot justify her on her enemies," Lahire answered. "Cauchon of Beauvais is dead and, as I take it, in hell these many years—alas! I always hoped he might perish with my fingers pinched about his throat, but it was not to be; life is not all joy, and that pleasure was denied me. Well, well, Joan would never be vindictive. But the old devil died miserably, I thank Heaven, and by a barber's hand—O blessed and enviable barber!—and it would be unfair to visit his sins upon his kin."

Gérardin was puzzled by Lahire's words and not unamused to find that the cowl did not altogether make the monk, and that something of the old leaven of free-companionship still lingered in the composition of the friar.

"Of what trial do you talk," he questioned, "and what of the kin of the Bishop of Beauvais?"

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"Why," answered Lahire, "there is a great council to be called of the wisest divines in France. They will reopen Joan's case, reconsider the particulars; they will welcome witnesses in her favor from all the ends of France, and they will, God willing, revoke the wicked judgment of the wicked Bishop of Beauvais."

"Amen!" ejaculated Gérardin. "God be glorified for these good tidings."

"But the kin of that dead and damnable murderer," continued Lahire, "have pleaded for acquitment of all complicity in his deed, to which, as is but just and reasonable, the King in his mercy is willing to agree. No more of them. Our dear dead angel's memory is to be redeemed. This is why I have come to Domremy to tell you, to tell your neighbors, all of them that knew her, that they will soon be called to speak in the presence of the great and the learned for the name of her you loved and love."

Lahire's face was aflame with his exultation; his eyes gleamed feverishly; his voice rang through the glade as it was wont to ring of old, when he called his Gascon rascals to battle. Once again the cough caught him in its grip and shook him like a straw.

"I thank Heaven," Gérardin cried, uplifting his hands in a rapture, "that I have lived till this day. Come to the village, noble Lahire, and cheer the neighbors."

Lahire had seated himself when the spasm of coughing had grasped him. He agreed cheerily.

"I will go with you," he said, and rose, only to fall

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back with a groan on the tree-trunk. Instantly Gérardin was bending over him, alarmed, tender.

"What is the matter? Are you ill?"

Lahire laughed a queer, little, dry laugh.

"I am well enough, I think. There was a leech in Rome that would tease me kindly enough about I know not what signs he saw in my face and felt in my fingers that made him doubtful for my heart. I told him that my heart broke in the market-place of Rouen on the day when devils did a girl to death. Then, when he bade me be careful, I answered him flatly, 'Lahire lives while Lahire lives, and Lahire dies when Lahire dies,' and so put him from me. No more of my woes. Go you and tell the people of Domremy."

Gérardin scanned him anxiously.

"I will bring the neighbors here," he promised—"those that knew Joan. They shall hear this news from your lips that served her, loved her, would have saved her."

He turned and sped quickly through the trees towards the village, and Lahire sat and listened to the fading sound of his footsteps. After he was gone out of sight, Lahire again tried to rise, and after a while succeeded in propping himself up with the aid of his long staff. He was talking to himself in a low, mumbling voice, and his face had grown suddenly gray.

"All my life I was afraid of my enemies, though I think none of them guessed my terrors. But now that I am face to face with my great enemy, it is strange that I have no fear."

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Leaning heavily upon his staff and progressing with difficulty, he moved towards the tree and continued his communing.

“Here I saw my angel for the first time. Where she knelt in innocence and inspiration, let me kneel in reverence and repentance.”

He knelt as he spoke, and a deeper note of devotion governed his waning voice.

“Joan, dear Joan, soldier on earth and saint in heaven, if you can see your servant on his knees, believe he is redeemed, believe he is cleansed, believe that he hopes in all humility for forgiveness for his sins, hopes that some time in paradise he may again greet the glory of your eyes.”

Now, as he said these words, it seemed to his swooning senses that the wood was suddenly flooded with a great white light that thrilled him with a sense of unthinkable glory, and lo! in the hollow of the Fairies' Tree there stood a figure, and the figure had the face and form of the Maid Joan. There came a sound of singing among the trees, as if all the winds of the world had been lulled to music, and through the universal melody there came the sound of a voice that was a human voice and yet a divine voice.

“Lahire! Lahire! Lahire!” it cried; and at the sound of it his heart swelled and his eyes swam in happy tears, and vision after vision flashed across his brain—a peasant girl at the foot of a Fairies' Tree, a slender girl in a boy's dress facing a faint-hearted king, a child in bright armor driving the islanders before her, a

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woman saving a sinner - woman's soul, a victim on trial, a martyr in prison, a saint at the stake. He stretched out his hands to the vision.

"Joan! Joan!" he cried. "Glory be to God, Joan!"

The vision seemed to stoop towards him and to stretch out strong hands to clasp his trembling fingers and lift him into paradise. Then Lahire fell forward on his face and lay very still.

From the little chapel on the hill floated the sound of childish voices. Colinette and her companions came forth from the shrine and descended the hill, chanting the hymn that a wise priest had rhymed for them in memory of Joan the Maid:

"Maiden Mother full of grace,
Seated in the starry space,
Bless the Maiden passed away,
Maiden whom the moon of May
Graced with good and evil chance—
Lady, bless the Flower of France."

As they came to the foot of the hill, Colinette saw Lahire where he lay and called to her comrades:

"Look, there is the holy man, lying stretched upon the grass."

"He said he was tired," answered the girl-child that Lahire had seated on his knee. "We promised to cover him with leaves and flowers."

In a moment the children scattered, swiftly and silently gathering handfuls of flowers and leaves. When arms and aprons were loaded, they crept close

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to the recumbent man and began gently to sprinkle over him their pretty spoils. As they were so employed Gérardin d'Épinal came upon them, guiding a little company of his gossips, men and women, to the Fairies' Tree.

"Where is the friar?" he asked.

Colinette came to him a-tiptoe, with her finger on her lips.

"Hush!" she chided. "He is asleep."

Gérardin quitted his company, bent over the extended form, and turned its calm, glad face to the sky. Uncovering, he crossed himself.

"Lahire sleeps his last sleep. Lahire has gone to Joan."

THE END

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